

Marxism *Today*

January 84

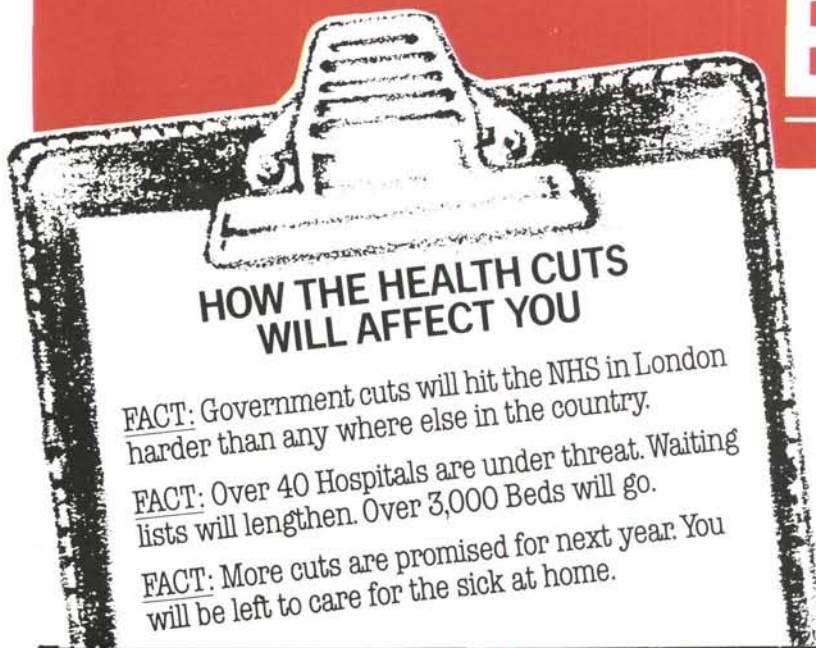
75p

1984

RAYMOND WILLIAMS on 1984 ... David Edgar on 1997
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DISTRIBUTION

Newsagents: Punch Distribution Services 23-27 Tudor
Street, London EC4Y 0HR

Subscriptions and bookshops:
Central Books Ltd, 14 The Leathermarket
London SE1 3ER

SUBSCRIPTION RATES for one year

Inland: individuals £9, students £7, institutions £12
Overseas: individuals £12, institutions £15

The editor welcomes contributions for publication in the
journal. Further details if
required from the editorial office. Please
send SAE if you want an acknowledgement
or manuscript returned.
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editorial board.

DESIGN Sue Lamble

TYPESET by Verbatim Graphics Ltd

PRINTED by Farleigh Press Ltd (TU)
Watford, Herts

COVER DESIGN: Lee Robinson and design team

COVER ILLUSTRATION: Tim Moore

Published by the Communist Party
16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY
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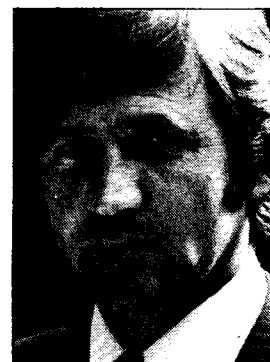
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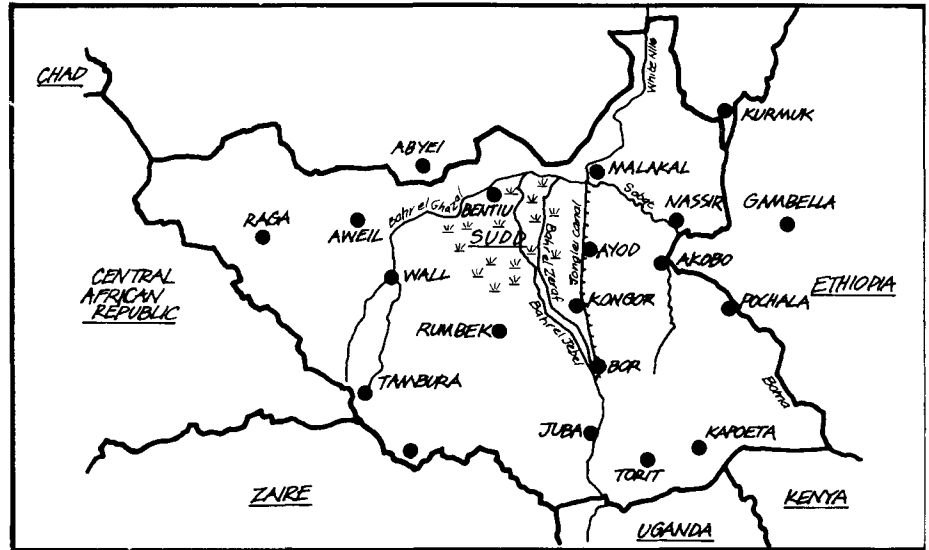
CONFLICT IN THE SOUTHERN SUDAN

Sudanese politics are turbulent at the best of times, with the army providing the power base of President Jaafar Nimeiri as he balances between the ambitions of rival religious, political and regional factions. Recent reports suggest that Nimeiri's balance may finally have slipped, and that the Sudan is seeing the re-emergence of civil war between the islamic north and the non-islamic south.

The recent introduction of Sharia (islamic) law in the Sudan has only made the renewal of civil strife more likely. It is opposed by groups from all parts of the country; however, particularly vocal opposition has come from southerners, who make up one-third of the population, and who perceive any islamisation of Sudanese institutions as a direct threat to their rights as non-islamic peoples. The south is particularly concerned at the moment as this measure follows others which have re-organised the administration in the southern region, and which are seen as contravening the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 which established the south's status as an autonomous region, a status won after 17 years of armed struggle by guerilla forces known as Anya-Nya.

Tension has been building in the south for well over a year now. Since September 1982 anti-government guerrillas calling themselves Anya-Nya 2 have been attacking army detachments, police posts, and arab merchants in a band of country across the northern part of the southern region. At the end of June, five foreign missionaries and wildlife experts were held hostage on the isolated Boma plateau near the Ethiopian frontier, in an attempt by a faction within the rebel movement calling themselves the Southern Sudan Liberation Front to gain publicity. Southern army detachments have mutinied at Bor, Pibor, Aiyat, Akobo, Nassir, Nzara, Rumbek, Torit, Malakal and Kapoeta. The scale of these mutinies varies: however, it appears as if over 1,000 armed troops, many of them experienced in guerrilla warfare, have left their posts to form the backbone of the Anya-Nya 2 movement.

The goal of the rebels is to achieve the secession of the south. Their political stance is unclear; however, certain key leaders appear to be communist. For the bulk of those involved the issue is primarily one of nationalism. It seems that the rebels are receiving support from Libya and Ethiopia in the form of arms, training and



Southern Sudan

broadcasting facilities. There have been attempts to set up a political wing of the movement, once again broadly communist in orientation, although it contains members not previously noted for their communist sympathies.

The origins of the current unrest go back to the colonial policy of the Anglo-Egyptian government which left the southern Sudan at independence in 1956 under-developed even by the poor standards of other peripheral areas of the country. Southern opposition to being administered from Khartoum, fears about being policed by northern soldiers and policemen, and concern over islamic economic and cultural domination led to the development of a long and bloody civil war in which several thousands of people lost their lives and over half a million refugees fled to neighbouring countries.

This ended in 1972 with the signing of the Agreement in Addis Ababa enshrining the southerner's rights to their own assembly and government. Anya-Nya guerrillas were absorbed into the police force and the army. It was provided that there should be a 50:50 balance between northern and southern troops in the region, and that the southern troops would be exempt from rotation to the north. The south was given the right to trade across its own frontiers with limited northern interference.

The peoples of the south were worn by 17 years of war, and most welcomed the chance to lead their lives within an autonomous region, rather than continuing a stalemated struggle. However southern mistrust of northern political intent has always remained close to the surface. Over the past few years several issues have emerged which have renewed southern

suspicion that the north is not truly committed to a real equality between the north and the south. Development efforts in the south have virtually all ended somewhat ignominiously with funds running out before project completion. There are, however, two massive capital intensive programmes currently underway in the southern region, oil exploration and the digging of the Jonglei canal. Southerners claim that the main beneficiaries of this work will be the north. The decision to pump the oil unrefined to Port Sudan has been regarded by many southerners as the theft of their resources and as an attempt to deprive the region of a valuable industrial investment. The Jonglei canal, designed to make more water available in the north and Egypt for irrigation agriculture, may affect the size of the Sudd marshes which in turn will alter the cattle carrying capacity of the land, and possibly result in social-economic problems for Dinka and Nuer cattle pastoralists.

The harassment of Dinka in the Abyei area, and the lack of response from Khartoum to their demands for a plebiscite to determine their regional affiliation, has provoked much bitterness in the north-west of the southern region. In October 1982 the national government signed a Charter of Integration with Egypt, which was greeted with alarm in the south, and provoked a riot in Rumbek where school students burnt down the provincial offices of the Sudan Socialist Union, the sole legal political party in the country. Meanwhile the impression that the northern government was attempting to cement relations with the arab world at the expense of southern links with the Sudan's black African neighbours was reinforced by the restricting of trade across southern

frontiers.

On May 24 of this year the Addis Ababa Agreement, the symbol of Sudanese unity, was disregarded by Nimeiri through the issue of a presidential decree that divided the autonomous southern region into three. Southerners argue that under Article 2 of the Addis accord the abolition of the old regional government by decree is unconstitutional, and that it represents an attempt by Khartoum to divide and rule. Redivision has been a major contributory factor in the rapid growth in the nature and extent of armed opposition to the government. The prediction that the south would now be powerless to resist unwelcome northern legislation has now been legitimated by the introduction of Islamic law.

What are the prospects for the south? The demonstrations in Juba in mid-October protesting against Islamic law would appear to herald the increasing involvement of the Equatorial peoples of the southern part of the southern region in opposition to the central government. Nimeiri appears to have banked upon political rivalry amongst southerners preventing a united opposition emerging to counter northern measures. He was initially correct in this assessment as the regional government, elected in 1982 and predominantly composed of Equatorians, was in favour of redivision, seeing it as a strategy for removing their Nilotic opponents permanently from the political scene. However as the political and economic consequences of redivision have hit home, Equatorial opinion has swung round to the opposition. Any doubts in peoples' minds about where they stand have probably now been dispelled by the introduction of Islamic law. As it appears that it will be politically impossible for Nimeiri to rescind his re-division and Sharia law decrees, it would seem that the armed rebellion hitherto concentrated in Nilotic areas will shortly be spreading to Equatoria.

It is tragic enough that this exceedingly poor part of Africa should be sliding back into civil strife. However, on top of this, the sheer size and position of the Sudan make it a conflict with international ramifications. The extent of the oil reserves in the south suggests that Nimeiri will fight very hard to retain control over the southern region. Nimeiri is one of America's staunchest allies in north-east Africa, supporting the US policy towards Libya and Chad, and providing occasional facilities for the Rapid Deployment Force. The US cannot afford to leave him undefended in the face of Libyan attempts

to depose him, and in recent years have channelled considerable amounts of arms into the country. So far Libyan backed insurgency has involved dissident northern Sudanese in the northern part of the country. However the south is now turning to the Libyans for support. Meanwhile it is possible that the Ethiopians could gain from promoting the southern cause, enabling them to put pressure on Khartoum over the Sudan's attitude to the Eritrean and Tigrean issues.

In mid-November Nimeiri visited Europe and the United States where he met with Reagan. Whilst he was abroad reports were released by Khartoum of the massing of Ethiopian troops along the border opposite Kurmuk district. It was claimed that this was the prelude to an incursion into Sudanese territory. Meanwhile 11 foreign technicians working on the oil and Jonglei programmes were kidnapped in two separate incidents in the Bentiu and Jonglei areas. Khartoum reported that they were being held under threat of execution if political demands, including the repeal of Sharia law, were not met.

The Ethiopians have vigorously denied building up forces along the Sudanese border, a denial that must be given some weight following reports of independent observers. The foreign technicians have all been freed, through the intervention of the army according to Khartoum. Independent reports, however, suggest that they were released voluntarily by the rebels and were not under threat of death, rather that they were being held out of the way during Anya-Nya troop movements. It would seem that the reporting of these incidents should be seen in the light of Nimeiri's hopes to gain further arms from the West. Whether or not he has been successful has yet to be announced. The international wheeling has begun.

Brian Armstrong

THE HOUSING BENEFIT BUNGLER

On 15 June residents of the London Borough of Bromley received a letter from the Borough Treasurer. It opened simply and directly: 'Many of you will be aware that the new housing benefit system is a mess'.

After explaining some of the reasons the letter described the impact of the new scheme in the borough: 'Many clients have not been entered on the computer system, there is a huge backlog of queries, complaints and changes in circumstances

which cannot be accepted by the computer system. Many tenants are being paid wrong amounts and many cheques are being sent out late. We realise that this is causing distress to the borough's residents, particularly the elderly.'

Bromley is in no way atypical, for similar letters have been sent out by authorities all over Britain, explaining and apologising for delays, confusion and errors involving housing benefit, all of which have been occurring on a massive scale. What is perhaps unusual is that local authorities, not normally renowned for admitting that their services are not functioning properly, should have been so uncharacteristically frank and open about the scale of the debacle. Even more remarkable has been the unanimity with which they have laid the blame fairly and squarely on the Government. There can be few examples in recent years of a new government scheme which has attracted such a uniform barrage of criticism from right across the political spectrum.

The reason for this is not that the scheme makes upwards of 2½ million households in Britain worse off, though that is one of the consequences. Nor is it that central government is again offloading its responsibilities, in this case transferring them from the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS) to local government. These implications of housing benefit were known long before the scheme was put into effect, and aroused little public comment other than perhaps predictable condemnation from the poverty lobby. No, the reason for the outcry is simply that the implementation of the scheme has been bungled on a quite remarkable scale. The story provides some interesting insights into the implementation of social welfare policy against the background of pressure for cuts.

The idea of a unified housing benefit bringing together the former rent and rate rebate schemes with the arrangements for meeting the housing costs of supplementary benefit recipients, was first advocated in the mid 1970s by David Donnison, then chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. Donnison argued that this would create a simpler, fairer and more coherent framework for helping to meet poor people's housing costs.

At the same time he sounded the warning that to do the job properly required some additional public expenditure. This would be necessary to iron out the anomalies created by unifying the two separate schemes. No progress was achieved before the 1979 general election, but subsequently the idea was resurrected

by the incoming Conservative government. Not only was there a broad consensus that a unified housing benefit was desirable, but it also held out the prospect of reducing DHSS employment through the transfer of responsibility to local authorities. There remained, however, the public expenditure problem — a problem which was resolved quite simply by the imposition of a 'no extra cost' limit on the reform.

So by the time the Government announced its proposals in a consultation paper 'Assistance with housing costs' (March 1981), there had been a major shift in emphasis. Instead of a reform designed to create a simpler and fairer benefit system for the claimants and to make it easier to administer, albeit at some extra cost, housing benefit was increasingly seen as a means of reducing staffing levels in the DHSS, while creating no extra cost in benefit payments. Significantly the word 'unified' disappeared from the proposal at precisely this time. The 'no extra cost' constraint made it impossible to unify the



The new system: the elderly suffer most

two schemes on any reasonable basis. Instead an increasingly complex series of rules were required to enable the two essentially different types of benefit — rent and rate rebates on the one side and supplementary benefit on the other — to be administered together. And because this inevitably resulted in substantial numbers of claimants facing serious financial losses, even more complexities were added to provide supplementary payments, or transitional protection to mitigate some of the losses.

The outcome was predictable: a hideously complex scheme which is incomprehensible to most claimants, and poses huge administrative problems to local authorities. This was bad enough, but to

compound the disaster the DHSS set an unrealistically tight timetable for the implementation of the scheme. The rush to get the new systems into operation was made even more chaotic by a flood of amending regulations which cascaded out of the DHSS throughout the winter of 1982/3 and, indeed, right up to and beyond the supposed full implementation date of April 1983.

Not surprisingly April came and went, leaving hundreds of thousands of claimants with no benefit. Computer systems were simply not coping, or programmes were so riddled with errors that all the assessments had to be re-done manually. Desperate claimants began to form queues outside council offices in the hope of getting some money to enable them to pay the rent. Many private tenants faced the threat of eviction. Many authorities were deluged with phone enquiries, as many as 700 in one day in one London borough alone.

Against this background of chaos and confusion the DHSS might have been expected to show signs of concern and regret at the widespread anxiety and hardship which its new scheme had caused to hundreds of thousands of people. Instead it initially adopted a tone of aloof disbelief — 'these reports of chaos were greatly exaggerated'. The responsible minister, Dr Rhodes Boyson, who, to be fair, had inherited the mess from his predecessor Hugh Rossi, made reassuring noises to the House of Commons, claiming initially that only 15 authorities were encountering difficulty with the scheme. When this was shown to be hopelessly out of touch with reality and the estimate of authorities in difficulty had to be raised from 15 to 100 (which still greatly underestimated the problem) the DHSS resorted to a second line of defence blaming the local authorities for the problems.

So now, more than seven months after the supposed 'full' start of the scheme, with thousands of claimants still not having received their proper benefit, and some unbelievably having received nothing at all, local authority councillors and staff are learning the hard truth that they have been sold the pass by the DHSS. They have been given responsibility for administering a hopelessly flawed benefit scheme, which fails to meet its original objectives (simplifying the system, making it fairer and easier for claimants to understand, and streamlining the administration) and which has left one in eight households in Britain worse off; and to add insult to injury they are being blamed for the fiasco.

As to the scheme itself, there can be few

more explicit examples of a good idea turned into a nightmare by the application of crude monetarist thinking, or, in more old fashioned terms, a ship ruined by the lack of the ha'penny worth of tar.

Nick Raynsford

BACK TO JAIL

Last October, staff morale at Grendon Prison in Buckingham finally snapped. It was reported in the press that officers were demoralised, prisoners disillusioned and bored. One of the few positive prison regimes in the country was being starved of essential resources.

Grendon had been a bold initiative. Launched in 1962, it was committed to the belief that long term, serious offenders could be reformed. It used therapeutic techniques, and employed outside professionals to run groups and classes. Like the earlier initiative at Holloway women's prison, it fell victim to remorseless departmental cost-benefit analysis which sought to make cuts wherever staffing ratios were thought excessive.

The withdrawal of support for progressive prison regimes such as Grendon is just one sign of a major shift in criminal justice policy. A Home Office rapidly coming to terms with the Government's ideology of 'just deserts' for offenders has shown little sign of resisting these changes. William Whitelaw, the previous Home Secretary, had managed during his term of office to keep the new Tory law and order visionaries at bay. But punitive measures announced by the new Home Secretary during the last three months have ended any optimism that a humane prison policy might contribute towards more general reforms. They have surprised most commentators, and clearly delighted the Tory right wing.

The main proposals announced so far include a minimum sentence of 20 years for the murder of police and prison officers; similar terms for terrorist murders, and for those who commit sexual murders of children; the penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of a crime was increased to life imprisonment; and no one serving more than five years for a violent or drugs-related offence would be eligible for parole. As a result of these measures, the Home Office has said that approximately 500 prisoners a year who previously would have expected parole can now no longer do so, although it added that the Home Secretary is committed to emptying the jails of drunks and fine defaulters within

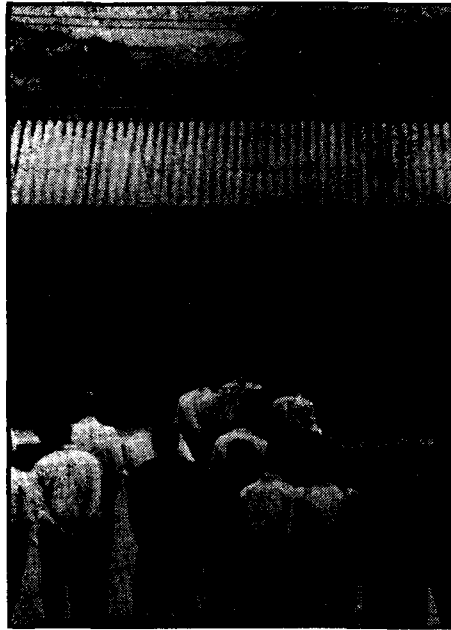
the next few months. The qualifying threshold for parole will be reduced on 1 January 1984 and this will result in a temporary reduction in the prison population. The Home Secretary has also stated publicly that measures to prevent fine defaulters being imprisoned are being taken. (However, recent trends suggest that more defaulters are opting for prison because they cannot afford to pay. At least 75% of those appearing in the debt courts are unemployed.)

A key element of the approach revealed so far is the power Leon Brittan has given himself to override the judiciary by retrospectively juggling with parole dates. Already this move has been challenged. Solicitors acting for a prisoner currently applying for parole have argued that the Home Secretary does not possess the executive power to change the parole rules and thereby abolish his own discretionary powers, without legislation. Whatever the outcome of this challenge it is likely that the Parole Board will be forced into the charade of continuing to consider each parole application on its merits, in the full knowledge that the Home Secretary has every intention of overruling all their positive recommendations. Not surprisingly, both Mr Brittan and his advisers have suffered some discomfort in dealing with the outcry from Parole Board members, the Prison Officers' Association and the prison governors.

It has already come to light that a number of life sentence prisoners at Leyhill and Sudbury open prisons, who had release dates, have been returned to closed conditions. Prison officers have reported that the new parole regulations have resulted in a rise in tension over the past few months, and they predict demonstrations and unrest in the future.

Undeterred by such fears, the Home Secretary, it seems, has opted for a right wing populist approach to criminal justice policy. As the leader writers in many of the tabloids have shown, it is not hard to win public support for a 20-year sentence for the murder of a police officer or for a terrorist killing. Indeed, they have helped create the impression that until Mr Brittan intervened, violent and serious offenders had been treated leniently in the courts. Nothing could be further from the truth; judges' recommendations on the length of sentences are always followed and release dates for prisoners are planned over a period of years, often after consultation with the trial judge.

The Home Secretary is also currently examining the possibility of seven-day



Fourteen new prisons are planned for 1990

sentences for 'bully boys and nasties.' Some Tory MPs have suggested that the Government create regional detention blocks, where the offender would be locked in his or her cell, alone, for the duration of the sentence. On top of this the Home Secretary is looking at the possibility of introducing an offenders' tag system which is already used in the US. Instead of being imprisoned the offender would be fitted with an electronic device which would enable his or her movements to be tracked by a computer.

Although the Home Secretary has been careful in the last few months to make a distinction between serious and petty offenders, those responsible for passing sentences will almost certainly pick up and act upon his main message — that things will get tougher for criminals. We are unlikely to see a spate of four-year sentences, which would allow judges to circumvent the new parole regulations. On the contrary, on the basis of previous experience, it can be expected that sentences will send more people to jail for longer periods. Last year, for instance, the Government passed the Criminal Justice Act, which gave magistrates new powers, but which specifically stated that the courts must not impose custodial sentences on young offenders unless it was necessary to protect the public, or if the offender was unwilling to respond to supervision in the community. The Home Office at the time insisted that there would be no increase in the numbers of young people sentenced to periods of custody. But the figures for the first quarter show an increase of 25% in the number of young people sentenced to

custody.

While the Government toys with longer sentences, greater police powers and neighbourhood watchdog schemes, the Home Office has been thinking more realistically. Their more pragmatic British Crime Survey mentioned at the Tory Party conference but missed by the popular press as well as by the Home Secretary himself, is an excellent example. The survey is based on the remarkable discovery that crime is rising much less than the records suggest. It presents a realistic view of the difficulties caused by crime statistics, for example. Reports of crime rates can be used to generate fear — by stressing, for instance, that one offence is committed every three seconds. An alternative way of presenting the problem would be that each police officer has one new offence to solve every four days. The survey reports that an individual can expect to be robbed once in five centuries, to be assaulted and caused slight injury once every hundred years, and to be burgled every forty years. The report also states that the chances of being burgled are slightly less than the chances of suffering a fire in the home. In reality, the elderly, popular victims of media crime stories, actually constitute a very small proportion of the victims of assault. It is the fact that such assaults are so appalling and so rare that explains media attention and the exceptional punishment meted out to those caught. Surprisingly, the chance of being assaulted is highest for the male who is under 20, single or divorced, drinks heavily and who assaults others.

The Home Secretary has chosen to underplay the significance of this survey. Instead, to accommodate the subjects of his new hardline strategy, the prison building programme is to be accelerated and expanded, with fourteen new prisons and 12,000 more places planned for 1990. In addition, the Home Office, on the Home Secretary's instruction, is now exploring the possibility of short-term prison camps and weekend jails presumably for the petty offenders who ought not to be in prison anyway. Prison camps are likely to be set up in disused forces' accommodation, and it has already been suggested that the weekend jails are housed in empty hospitals and schools. All this seems certain to result in a large increase in the total number of offenders imprisoned in any one year. Leon Brittan's supposed commitment to balance in criminal justice policy and his promises to divert offenders from jail are rendered meaningless by a detailed examination of Conservative law and order strategy.

Harry Fletcher

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Lebanon has become a pawn in international politics. Things can never be the same again: but the outcome remains highly unpredictable.

Roger Owen

LEBANON:

The Middle East battleground

PRESIDENT REAGAN'S IDENTIFICATION of Lebanon as the scene of a major confrontation between East and West has added a dangerous extra dimension to the already deep-rooted crisis in that divided and embattled country. Having decided that he could not persuade the Syrians to withdraw their 40,000 or so troops by diplomatic means, he used the Israeli Prime Minister's visit to Washington in late November to cement a new military and strategic alliance with the major aim of trying to expel them by threat of force. For the time being the pressure will be exerted by the bombardment of Syrian positions by sea and air. But President Assad and his advisers in Damascus can be in little doubt that the bottom line of the new agreement is an Israeli commitment to start a ground war if necessary. Justification — as always — is provided by the allegation that the Syrians are acting directly as the agents of Moscow. As Reagan himself tried to argue during his invasion of Grenada — itself triggered off in part by the lorry-bomb attack on the American marines in Beirut: 'The events in Lebanon and Grenada, though oceans apart, are closely related'. Both, he said, were scenes of major Soviet activity by means of a 'network of surrogates and terrorists'.

The American/Israeli military alliance is only the latest in a series of abrupt twists and turns in American policy beginning with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. There seems little doubt that Mr Begin and General Sharon were given some sort of green light to go ahead by the then Secretary of State, Alexander Haig. But no sooner had the Israelis besieged Beirut and come into potentially dangerous conflict with the Syrian troops along the Beirut/Damascus road than the Americans tried to defuse the situation and to build up the authority of Lebanese central government. This was an effort to safeguard their wider Middle Eastern peace initiative designed to sidetrack Palestinian demands

for an independent state. It was with this aim that in September 1982 they helped to negotiate the agreement which allowed Yasser Arafat and his Palestinian guerillas to leave Beirut, using a small detachment of American troops to assist their departure. Then, after the assassination of President Bashir Gemayel and the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps, they sent in a larger number of Marines as part of a four-nation Multinational Peacekeeping Force. The force was given the twin task of facilitating the withdrawal of Israeli troops from West Beirut and of shoring up the authority of the government of the new President, Amin Gemayel. The announcement of the Reagan Peace Plan calling for a 'fully autonomous' Palestinian entity linked to Jordan during that same month, was also part of this general strategy.

Growing doubts

American policy worked after a fashion for about six months. Inside Lebanon the Multinational Force provided sufficient support to allow President Gemayel to begin to rebuild some of the central organs of the state. Outside, the Arab Summit of Fez followed by the meeting of the PLO in Algiers in February 1983, seemed to provide promise of movement in the direction of a joint Palestinian/Jordanian approach to negotiations with the Israelis over the future of the West Bank. As far as Lebanon itself was concerned, the culmination of this stage of American policy was the joint agreement between Israel and Lebanon for the withdrawal of Israeli troops, finally signed on 17 May 1983.

But even before the Syrians, and some of their Lebanese allies, had begun to challenge the withdrawal agreement on the grounds that it provided the basis for a continued Israeli military presence in the south, other developments were taking place which cast serious doubts on the viability of the American policy. One was

the way in which the new Lebanese government soon lost most of its credibility for being either neutral or properly national as a result of its employment of large numbers of members of the President's own Phalange party in sensitive positions. The fact that the regime also pursued a heavy-handed security policy against Palestinians and Lebanese Muslims living in West Beirut while continuing to tolerate Phalange control over much of East Beirut, was a further sign of its basic orientation.

Equally important developments were taking place in the Shuf mountains behind Beirut. Here the Phalange had sought to take advantage of the Israeli occupation to extend its enforced protection over Christian villages while trying to undermine the authority of Walid Jumblat, the leader of the majority of the Druze community which was concentrated there. This soon produced a united Druze counter-reaction in the form of sectarian killings and then increasingly bitter fighting against Phalange encroachment. Under the pressure of these events, the initial Israeli encouragement of Phalangist expansionism gave way to an attempt to contain the intra-communal fighting and then, finally, to a much more decidedly pro-Druze stance; so

It was at this stage that American/Syrian relations were at their most close.

that, by February 1983, the Israelis had gone so far as to allow the Druze to drive the Phalange out of the important town of Aley on the main Beirut/Damascus road. Pressure from the Israeli Druze community certainly had something to do with this change of strategy. But it also coincided with the resignation of General Sharon, the main architect of the Israeli/Phalange alliance, and his replacement as Defence Minister by Moshe Arens who quickly began to pursue the very different policy of

trying to reach a *modus vivendi* with the leaders of each of Lebanon's major confessional groups.

Arafat's fall

Finally, in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley in the east Lebanon, an accelerating revolt was taking place among the Palestinian fighters stationed there, against the leadership of Yasser Arafat. While there is no doubt that this movement was encouraged and supported by the Syrians, it was certainly based firmly on a growing sense of grievance against Arafat himself, notably his tolerance of inefficient and sometimes corrupt subordinates and his apparently growing taste for negotiations which were supposed to lead to the creation of a West Bank mini-state. For such men,

designed to facilitate the creation of a Palestinian state.

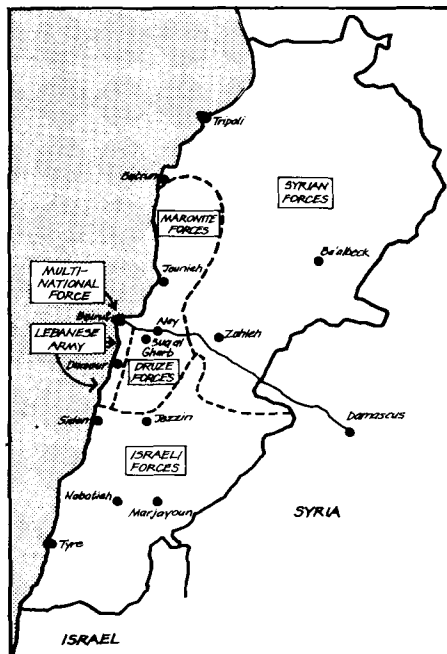
The next stage in these developments took place through the summer of 1983, culminating in the Israeli military withdrawal from the Shuf mountains early in September and the attempt by the Lebanese army to replace them. It was during this same period that the Gemayel government began a concerted attempt to use its army to establish control throughout Beirut and its immediate environs, producing an increasingly angry reaction from the Muslim inhabitants, notably the half a million Shiites living in the western suburbs. Meanwhile, continued American support for the training and deployment of the Lebanese army was being widely interpreted as placing the United States

followed by three weeks of bitter fighting in which the Druze managed to drive the remaining Phalangist militia out of the mountains while preventing the Lebanese army from doing more than maintain a tenuous bridgehead in the hill-town of Souk al-Gharb directly above the American positions at Beirut airport. There seems little doubt that this town too would have fallen if it had not been for a steadily escalating use of United States naval and air power against Druze artillery. It was then that an international mediation effort involving the Saudis, the Americans and the Syrians led to the negotiation of a ceasefire which came into effect on September 26. The general context of this was a programme of national reconciliation calling for a conference of Lebanese confessional leaders to solve their differences and to allow the formation of a government of national unity.

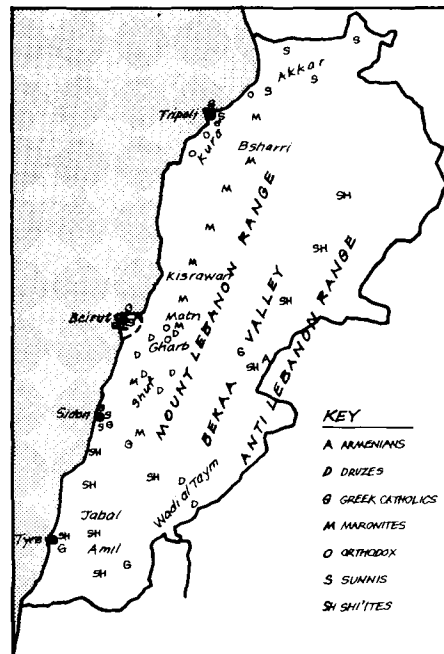
It was at this stage that American/Syrian relations were at their closest. It would seem that strenuous United States efforts were made to repair the damage caused by the fact that the Syrians had been largely ignored in the negotiations leading up to the Israeli/Lebanese withdrawal agreement, even though their own security interests were so vitally affected. The care with which the main American representative, Robert McFarlane, attended to these negotiations seemed to pay off in a Syrian willingness to drop their larger demands for the return of the Golan Heights and for the recall of the Geneva Middle East Peace Conference on Palestine of which both the United States and the Soviet Union are co-chairpersons. President Assad did, however, stick out for the abrogation of the Israeli/Lebanese withdrawal agreement. And it was this, in the end, which seems to have been one of the major reasons for the final shift in American policy which took place in November, away from the limited diplomatic cooperation with Syria towards a strategic cooperation with Israel against Syria.

US hard line

The reasons for this abrupt change of policy are still not clear. But they must certainly have something to do with the dangerous and dramatic events of late October and early November. These included the huge bomb explosions at the French and American military headquarters in Beirut and the one at the Israeli headquarters in Tyre which soon followed. All three of the aggrieved governments were quick to blame the huge loss of life on Shiite militants egged on by Syria. The American invasion of



LEBANON November 1983
showing its main population centres and areas currently controlled by main forces.



LEBANON November 1983
showing its present boundary and the broad traditional location of main communities.

the news of Arafat's negotiation with their arch-enemy, King Hussein, in the spring of 1983 was, it seems, the last straw. And with Syrian and Libyan assistance they began to drive pro-Arafat loyalists out of the Bekaa and back to the two refugee camps located just north of the port city of Tripoli. The Syrians, for their part, were using their newly restored confidence, based on the arrival of Soviet military equipment and, in particular, ground-to-air missiles, to try to bring the Palestine Liberation Organisation completely under their control. This was a way of sabotaging any possibility of a Jordanian/Israeli agreement over the West Bank and elevating themselves as the main negotiators in any international conference

squarely behind a government which, judged by its acts, is little more than an instrument for renewed Maronite/Phalange domination over the other Lebanese communities. The bombing of the American Embassy in April 1983, and then an intensified spate of attacks on the Marine base near the airport, were obvious signs of this. Unsuccessful American efforts to persuade the Israelis to delay their withdrawal until the Lebanese army was strong enough to take over their positions in the Shuf only made the inherent ambiguity of the American position still clearer.

Close US/Syrian relations

The final Israeli pull-out in September was

Grenada followed. And so did a strenuous counter-attack against the policy of cooperation with Syria launched by the Secretary of State, George Schultz, anxious, many would say, to protect his one and only major foreign policy achievement: the Israeli/Lebanese Withdrawal Agreement. Hence, even while the Lebanese National Reconciliation Conference was taking place in Geneva in the first week of November and agreeing to send President Gemayel off to Washington to try to ease — or even 'freeze' — the objectionable terms of this agreement, an American Under-Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, was visiting Israel to sound out the new government of Itzhak Shamir on a plan for joint military pressure on Syria. The fact that President Assad went into hospital at

Lebanon's Religious Communities (estimates)

Maronite Christian	9,000,000
Orthodox Christians	250,000
Greek Catholics	150,000
Shiite Muslims	1,100,000
Sunni Muslims	750,000
Druze	200,000
Armenians	175,000

just this same time may have given added impetus to these discussions. With both the Syrian and Soviet leaders ill, so it may have been argued, now was the time to get tough.

With the Israeli leaders willing to cooperate — albeit in exchange for a huge list of arms supplies and credits — those officials in favour of a hard line against Syria were able to obtain President Reagan's support. No doubt their arguments went something like this: the only hope of keeping President Gemayel's government in power and of allowing it to extend its control outside Beirut is to get the Syrians to withdraw; United States military pressure alone cannot guarantee this because of the shortage of ground forces but an agreement with Israel will get round this problem; success will bring the added bonus of allowing the marines to be withdrawn in time for the 1984 presidential election.

By the time Prime Minister Shamir and President Gemayel arrived in Washington in the last week of November the plans for the new policy were complete. While Shamir came away with an agreement to establish a joint United States/Israeli military committee in January 1984 to plan further strategic cooperation, President Gemayel was given little more than a homily about the need to act tough in the

deployment of his army and to behave in a more conciliatory fashion towards the Muslim communities — an obviously contradictory policy which he seems incapable of pursuing. Meanwhile, Yasser Arafat's last stand in Tripoli could be conveniently forgotten and his role as leader of the PLO outside Lebanon ignored.

The Lebanese nation

The country which provides the arena for all this external manipulation is small — some 3½ million people, divided into numerous religious communities and, since 1976, subject to the prolonged occupation of all but its central heartland by Syrian, Israeli, and, to a lesser extent, Palestinian forces. It owes its boundaries to the French who created it as an enclave for their Maronite Christian protégés after the First World War, and its constitutional arrangements to France's efforts to co-opt the leaders of the Muslim communities into a system of government designed to preserve its own, and Maronite, hegemony. These avowedly confessional arrangements were enshrined in the so-called National Pact of 1943 in which some of the leaders of the two most numerous and powerful communities, the Maronites and the Sunni Muslims of the coastal towns, came to an agreement about the basic principles upon which their power in the newly independent state should be founded. This agreement is usually presented as involving a set of mutual concessions, with the Maronite leaders agreeing to act as though Lebanon was an Arab state and not an outpost of Europe and the Sunni Muslims acquiescing to continued Maronite domination of the state structure. But, just as important, it also reaffirmed the desire of both sets of leaders to find a way of

With both the Syrian and Soviet leaders ill . . . now was the time to get tough.

cooperating together in the management of a system which ensured their own economic and political supremacy.

The new system was immediately subject to a large number of pressures, both internal and external. Internally, the rapid growth of the economy based on the development of Beirut's role as a commercial entrepot and banking centre for the region created a widening gap between the wealth of different social groups, while drawing more and more of the peasant agriculturalists into the capital city in search of better employment. Meanwhile,

the state structure remained weak, being dominated by bankers, merchants and landowners who had little use for its support, and was unable to provide even the most elementary services in the more economically backward parts of the country in the north, east and south.

Externally, Lebanon was drawn into a number of Middle Eastern disputes taking place around it, becoming unwilling host to over 100,000 Palestinian refugees after the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and then being turned into something of a battleground for proxy fights between supporters of one or other of its stronger Arab neighbours. The culmination of this process was the brief civil war of 1958 in which local factions, aided and abetted by an array of outside fighting forces from the Americans to the Egyptians, engaged in a short period of bitter fighting before the system was put together again by the Army Commander, General Shehab, who had wisely kept his troops out of the struggle until the warring chieftains had agreed to negotiate.

The Lebanese Left

It is often asserted by Lebanese historians that the presidency of General Shehab, 1958-64, offered a last chance for Lebanon to avert catastrophe. Their argument is that the General's attempt to increase the power of the central government and to use its resources to develop the economic life of the more backward and deprived regions was the only way to avoid that overlap of class and confessional conflicts which was later to play such an important role in igniting the Second Civil War of 1975/6. But is probably more true to say that Shehab's failure only served to underline the way in which the system was impervious to reform. A predominantly service economy, dominated by merchants and bankers, and with only a few industrialists, meshed closely with a confessional political system in which the leaders of the various communities were able to cooperate together to a sufficient degree to share out the few spoils among their clients and supporters. Neither the economic nor the political elite had any interest in increasing the power of the state, while the fact that up to two-thirds of the workforce was employed in the service sector left little room for the creation of class-based organisations which might have posed a successful challenge to the existing distribution of wealth and power.

What would have happened in Lebanon without the 1967 Middle East war and the consequent establishment of a powerful

Palestinian guerrilla movement is impossible to say. What in fact did take place was a momentary coincidence of interest between Lebanon's fledgling leftist groups, and the Palestinian fighters in and around Beirut, which, in turn, provoked a major counter-challenge from the Phalange party and its militia as defenders of the existing *status quo*. The ferocity of this struggle, which really began in earnest in the early 1970s, was greatly exacerbated by two other developments: the intensification of the fighting between Palestinians and Israelis across Lebanon's southern border and the effect this had on driving numbers of the poor Shiite peasants from the disputed areas north to find work in Beirut. All this seemed to provide an opportunity for the further progress of the radical groups, including the Lebanese Communist Party, and the 'New Left' Organisation for Communist Action, loosely connected together after 1969 in the Lebanese National Movement under the general leadership of the Druze socialist, Kamal Jumblat. But, in the event, the unashamedly sectarian response of the Phalange to their challenge, and the fact that they were a coalition of so many different social forces and ideological tendencies, made effective coordination difficult. Already, by February 1976, some of their leaders like Jumblat were backing away from their Transitional Programme of August 1975 with its emphasis on a thoroughgoing democratisation and secularisation of the Lebanese system, towards a strategy designed to use their armed strength to push for confessional reforms of a kind which would allow Muslims, *en masse*, parity of representation in Parliament and the state administration.

As the fighting progressed the Left's greatest chance of success could have been military victory over the Phalange in the spring of 1976. But this was prevented by Syrian intervention. And from then on, the National Movement, deprived of the unifying role of Jumblat after his assassination later that same year, became militarily weaker and more fragmented, while the Phalange was able to intensify its control of East Beirut and the Maronite heartland to the north under the violent leadership of Bashir Gemayel, the second son of the founder of the party, Pierre Gemayel. By 1980, Bashir had eliminated all but one of his Maronite rivals, and then organised his militias into a new military grouping known as the Lebanese Forces which he used to further his strategy of taking over the main institutions of the Lebanese state with the help of an increasingly close alliance with the Israelis.

The rise of the Shiite Movement

As the power of the National Movement waned, the only opposition of Bashir's plans seemed to be provided by the Palestinians and the Syrians. But this was to ignore the potential of a new group which had emerged among the Muslim population, the Shiite Movement of the Disinherited begun in 1974 by the religious leader, the Imam Musa Sadr, with its military arm known as Amal. The movement announced itself with a number of mass rallies and a policy of opposition to the Israeli raids into southern Lebanon where at least half of the over a million strong community continued to live. However, it played little role in the fighting of 1975/6 and only became of real military importance in 1978 when, as a result of the brief Israeli occupation of the south, large numbers of poor Shiites were again driven to Beirut to find shelter in the slums and shanty towns around the western part of the city. Such people provided ready recruits for the Shiite militia, and from then on its strength grew impressively, even if it was not able to pursue a coordinated political and military strategy due to the fact that the community was still geographically dispersed and ideologically divided.

While the main Beirut leadership under Musa Sadr's successor, Nabih Berri, developed a 'nationalist' stand aimed at increasing Shiite power within a reconstituted state structure, others in the Bekaa

**the main military battle will
be fought in the air and
around the Marine base at
the edge of Beirut airport.**

Valley and in the south adopted a more 'Islamic' stance, influenced by the Iranian revolution and stressing the primacy of the fight against Israel and American imperialism.

The importance of the Shiites increased still further after the Israeli invasion of June 1982. Both in West Beirut and in the Israeli-controlled south they began to play an increasing role in the fighting against the Israeli army and, latterly, the Lebanese army as well. In addition, Amal succeeded in creating closer the links with the Shiite leadership in the south, making it much more difficult for the Israelis to organise the village militias which they hoped would provide useful local agents for their policies. With the Israeli withdrawal to the line of the Awali river, halfway between Beirut and the southern border, in

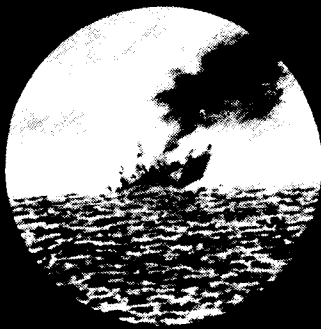
September 1983, and more especially with their attempts to control movement across this line in the wake of the Tyre lorry-bomb attack, the Shiite population of the south is steadily moving from passive resistance to open insurrection. It is clear that the Shiite/Druze military alliance will now do much to determine the course of events in the Muslim areas south of Beirut.

The future

What of the future? It is obviously clear that the people of Lebanon are not going to be left alone to sort out their own difficulties even if they are capable of doing so. For the time being the main military battle will be fought in the air and around the Marine base at the edge of Beirut airport. And given the enormously high stakes involved, with Soviet anti-aircraft missiles deployed so close to American and Israeli positions, it seems likely that there will be an initial period of bluff and pin-prick pressure. This, while it lasts, will at least have the advantage of allowing certain countervailing forces to assert themselves: the American Congress, Israeli anti-war opinion and the increasing alarm at American policy felt by the three European governments with troops in the Multinational Force. Among many other things, fighting in Lebanon is a very public and highly televised encounter, where news cannot simply be managed as in the Falklands or Grenada. Beyond that, the only other prediction which can be put forward with any certainty is that Syria will resist efforts to eject her troops by force so long as the home front, under the leadership of an ill President Assad, continues to hold.

In these circumstances, the Lebanese leaders, if and when they reassemble for the second stage of their Reconciliation Conference, will still be faced with a situation in which three-quarters of their national territory and about half their population are under foreign control. And even what they do with what is left is not entirely up to them to decide. A new National Pact and the creation of a government of National Unity seems to be about the best they can hope for. But whether they can even agree on this, and whether all of the fellow members of their different communities will consent to follow their lead is doubtful. Meanwhile, stresses and strains within the government's shaky institutions are bound to get worse, with a mutiny of the army's predominantly Shiite rank and file perhaps the most obvious bet if fighting should start again. It is a grim prospect. □

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Raymond Williams

Nineteen Eighty Four in 1984

How does the novel help our understanding of the year?

It was never at all likely that any actual society, in 1984, would much resemble the hellhole of Orwell's novel. He was in any case not making that kind of prediction:

'I do not believe that the kind of society I describe necessarily *will* arrive, but I believe (allowing of course for the fact that the book is a satire) that something resembling it *could* arrive.'¹

The qualification is important. He had written earlier:

'This is a novel about the future — that is, it is in a sense a fantasy, but in the form of a naturalistic novel. That is what makes it a difficult job — of course as a book of anticipations it would be comparatively simple to write.'²

This difficulty of the form needs emphasis as we try in his arbitrarily dated year to reassess his vision. The form is in fact more complex than the combination, in his terms, of 'fantasy' and 'naturalistic novel'. For there is a third element, most clearly represented by the extracts from the notorious Book and by the appendix on The Principles of Newspeak. In the case of the Book, especially, the method of the writing is that of argument: the historical and political essay.

There are then in effect three layers in the novel. First, an infrastructure, immediately recognisable from Orwell's other fiction, in which the hero-victim moves through a squalid world in a series of misunderstandings and disappointments, trying and failing to hold on to the possibility — as much a memory as a vision — of a sweeter kind of life. Second, a structure of argument, indeed of anticipations, in the extracts from the Book and in some of the more general descriptions of the actual society. Third, a superstructure, including many of the most memorable elements, in which, by a method ranging from fantasy to satire and parody, the cruelty and repression of the society are made to appear at once ludicrous and savagely absurd.

Three themes predominate in the central structure of argument on which, at the level of ideas, the book is founded. First, there is the division of the world into three super-states, which in shifting alliances are in a state of limited but perpetual war. Second, there is the internal tyranny of each of these States, with a specific version

of the relations between social classes and a detailed presentation of a totalitarian society which has been developed beyond both capitalism and socialism. Third, there is the exceptional emphasis on the control of a society through ideas and means of communication: backed up by direct repression and torture but mainly operating through 'thought control'.

Isolating the themes

These three themes need to be considered in detail, both in Orwell's presentation of them and in the actual history to which they offer to relate. It is especially important to consider all three, and to see how Orwell thought of them as essentially interrelated. Ironically, however, it is only possible to consider them with the seriousness that he expected, if we isolate them, temporarily, from the actual structure of the novel, and, in a more permanent way, from the resonance which, since its publication, has surrounded it.

It would be possible, for example, to run a silly kind of checklist on the projections. Is there an Anti-Sex League? Is there a two-way telescreen for spying on people in their homes? Is there a statutory Two Minutes Hate? No? Well then it just shows, as some said at the time, that the book is a wild kind of horror-comic, or at best stupidly exaggerated. But these are elements of the parodic superstructure. The structure then? Yet in the predominant political resonance which has surrounded the novel we do not even have to look at these arguments, because their proof is already given in the 'real world.' 'This is where socialism gets you.' 'This is where it has already got, in Russia and Eastern Europe.' But Orwell was quick to separate himself from this interpretation, which accounted for much of the early success of the book and which is still offered as if it were beyond question.

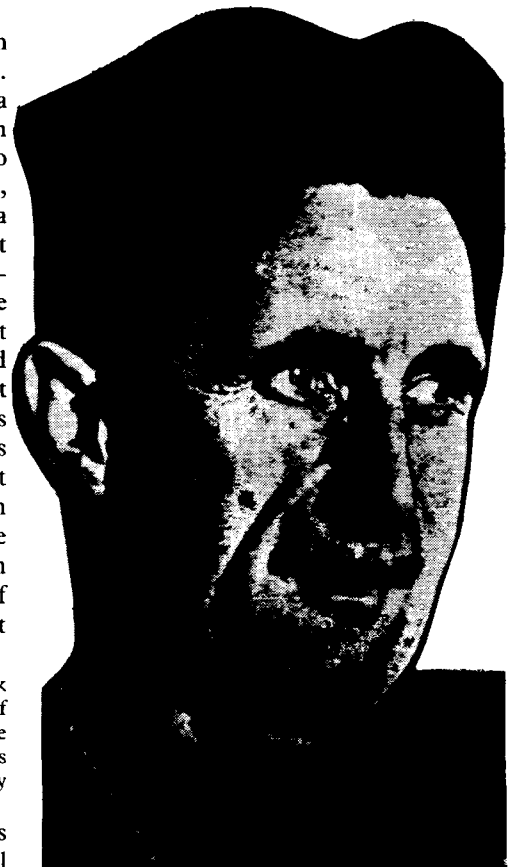
'My recent novel is NOT intended as an attack on Socialism or on the British Labour Party (of which I am a supporter) but as a show-up of the perversions to which a centralised economy is liable and which have already been partly realised in Communism and Fascism.'³

'Partly realised', in the social orders directed by Stalin and Hitler. The full

perversions are shown as going further. Moreover the easy response, to put down the book and look East, where 'it is all already happening', should be checked by Orwell's emphasis:

'The scene of the book is laid in Britain in order to emphasise that the English-speaking races are not innately better than anyone else and that totalitarianism, if *not fought against*, could triumph anywhere.'⁴

The point is more than one of local correction, against the use and abuse of the novel during the cold war. It is central to Orwell's arguments that what is being described, in its main tendencies, is not only a universal danger but a universal process. That is the true source of his horror. If the novel is absorbed into the propaganda of this or that state, as a basis for hating and fearing an enemy state, against which there must be preparation for war, there is the really savage irony that a citizen of 'Oceania', in



1984, is thinking as he has been programmed to think, but with the reassurance of the book to tell him that he is free and that only those others are propagandised and brainwashed. Orwell was offering no such reassurance. He saw the superstates, the spy states, and the majority populations controlled by induced ideas as the way *the world* was going, to the point where there would still be arbitrary enemies, and names and figures to hate, but where there would be no surviving faculty of discovering or telling the truth about *our own* situation: the situation of any of us, in any of the states and alliances. This is a much harder position than any simple anti-socialism or anti-communism. It is indeed so hard that we must begin by examining what he took to be its overpowering conditions, leading first to the superstates and to limited perpetual war.

SUPERSTATES

Nineteen Eighty-Four is so often quoted as a vision of the worst possible future world that it may seem odd to say that in at least one respect Orwell notably underestimated a general danger. It is not often remembered that in the novel a war with atomic bombs has been fought in the 1950s. There are not many details, though it is mentioned that an atomic bomb fell on Colchester. This is one of several instances in which, read from the actual 1984, the novel can be clearly seen as belonging to the 1940s. Orwell was quick to comment on the importance of the new weapon. He wrote in *Tribune* in October 1945 that it was dangerous mainly because it made the strong much stronger; its difficult manufacture meant that it would be reserved to a few powerful societies that were already heavily industrialised. 'The great age of democracy and of national self-determination' had been 'the age of the musket and the rifle'. Now, with this invention,

'we have before us the prospect of two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds, dividing the world between them.'⁵

This is not only the outline of the world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is also an intelligent recognition of the actual power of the new weapons. Yet still, after this, he included in his story a war with atomic weapons after which, though with its own kinds of horrors, a relatively recognisable land and society survived. This is no discredit to Orwell. Again and again it has been almost

impossible to imagine the true consequences of an atomic war, as distinct from the one-sided use of the bomb which has been the only actual event. Indeed there has been a familiar kind of *doublethink* about nuclear weapons, in which it is simultaneously if contradictorily known that they would lead to massive and in many cases absolute destruction and yet that, with sufficient political determination, of whatever kind, they could be absorbed and survived.

Pessimistic world view

The idea of an atomic war in the 1950s was common enough in the middle and late 1940s. It was seen as virtually inevitable, once more than one state possessed atomic bombs, by several writers and especially by James Burnham, about whom Orwell wrote two substantial essays in the years in which he was writing *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.⁶

It is strange now, when Burnham has been largely forgotten, and when *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is so much better known than Orwell's essays, to retrace the formation of the 'pessimistic world-view' of the novel. We can look again at the idea of the dominant superstates. In the novel it is as follows:

'The splitting up of the world into three great super-states was an event which could be and indeed was foreseen before the middle of the twentieth century. With the absorption of Europe by Russia and of the British Empire by the United States, two of the three existing powers, Eurasia and Oceania, were already effectively in being. The third, Eastasia, only emerged as a distinct unit after another decade of confused fighting.'⁷

in at least one respect Orwell underestimated a general danger

The next stage in Orwell's development of the idea, while he was in the middle of writing his novel, follows from his definition of three political possibilities: a preventive war by the United States, which would be a crime and would in any case solve nothing; a cold war until several nations have atomic bombs, then almost at once a war which would wipe out industrial civilisation and leave only a small population living by subsistence agriculture; or

'that the fear inspired by the atomic bomb and other weapons yet to come will be so great that everyone will refrain from using them. This seems to me the worst possibility of all. It would mean the division of the world among two or three vast superstates, unable to conquer one another and unable to be overthrown by any internal rebellion. In all probability their structure would be hierarchic, with a semi-divine caste at

the top and outright slavery at the bottom, and the crushing out of liberty would exceed anything that the world has yet seen. Within each state the necessary psychological atmosphere would be kept up by complete severance from the outer world, and by a continuous phoney war against rival states. Civilisations of this type might remain static for thousands of years.'⁸

This is, in effect, the option taken by the novel, though an intervening and less damaging atomic war has been retained from earlier positions. In his directly political writing, at this time, Orwell saw an alternative to all three dangers: the building of 'democratic Socialism... throughout some large area... A Socialist United States of Europe seems to me the only worthwhile political objective today.'⁹ But in the perspective of the fiction this is entirely absent.

Obviously we must ask, in 1984, why none of Orwell's three (or four) possibilities has occurred. Yet we must do this soberly, since we shall not be released from any of the dangers he and others foresaw by the mere passage of a fictional date. It is not, in some jeering way, to prove Orwell wrong, but to go on learning the nature of the historical developments which at his most serious he was trying desperately to understand, that we have to ask what he left out, or what he wrongly included, in his assessment of the world-political future.

No unitary superstates

First we have to notice that what came through, in this period, were not unitary superstates or empires but the more complex forms of military superpowers and primarily military alliances. There are times, especially as we listen to war propaganda, when we can suppose that the Burnham/Orwell vision has been realised, in the monolithically presented entities of 'East' and 'West', and with China as the shifting partner of either. But the full political realities have turned out to be very different. There is, for example, a coexistent and different hierarchy of economic power, with Japan and West Germany as major forces. In significantly different degrees in 'East' and 'West', but everywhere to some extent, old national forms have persisted and continue to

¹ *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters* IV 502.

² *Ibid* 329-30.

³ *Collected Essays* IV 502.

⁴ *Ibid* IV 502.

⁵ *Ibid* IV 8.

⁶ *Burnham and the Managerial Revolution* (1946); *Burnham and the Contemporary World Struggle* (1947).

⁷ *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 150-1.

⁸ *Collected Essays* IV 371.

⁹ *Ibid* IV 371.

command the loyalty of majorities, though also in every such nation, including those of 'the West', there is a significant minority who are conscious agents of the interests of the dominant power in the military alliance.

At the same time, in ways that Orwell could not have foreseen, these elements of political autonomy and diversity — within very narrow margins in the Warsaw Pact, within broader margins in NATO which contains most kinds of political state from liberal democracies to military dictatorships — are radically qualified by the nature of modern nuclear-weapons systems. The atomic war of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is damaging but not disastrous; in fact it is made to precipitate the 'perpetual limited war' which is a central condition of the novel, in which the superstates



are unconquerable because their rulers cannot risk atomic war. The war actually being fought, with its distant battles and its occasional rockets, belongs technologically to the 1940s. But then it is not only that the effects of atomic war have been underestimated; it is that the military and political consequences of a relative monopoly of nuclear weapons have turned out to be quite different from anything that Orwell and most others supposed.

'Suppose — and really this is the likeliest development — that the surviving great nations make a tacit agreement never to use the atomic bomb against one another? Suppose they only use it, or the threat of it, against people who are unable to retaliate? In that case we are back where we were before, the only difference being that power is concentrated in still fewer hands and that the outlook for subject peoples and oppressed classes is still more hopeless.'¹⁰

Between the powers that have acquired atomic weapons there has been neither formal nor tacit agreement never to use the weapons against one another. On the contrary, the predominant policy has been one of mutual threat. Within this policy there has not, as Orwell thought, been technical stagnation, but a continual enlargement and escalation of weapons systems, each typically developed under an alleged threat of the superiority of the other side. And these have now reached the point at which national autonomies, within the alliances, contradict in one central respect the technical requirements of the most modern systems, which require instant response or even, some argue, preventive

first use, if the other power is not to gain an early and overwhelming advantage.

It would be easy to argue from this, yet again, that the Burnham/Orwell kind of superstate, with the necessary unitary command, is inevitable, as a product of the new weapons. But to move to that kind of superstate, for all its strategic advantages, would be to provoke major political problems — especially, for example, in Western Europe — which would endanger and probably break the now fragile compromise between surviving political autonomies and loyalties and the military-strategic alliance which has been superimposed on them. Thus Britain, in 1984, both is and is not, in Orwell's phrase, Airstrip One. It is dense with its own and foreign air and missile bases but it is also — and crucially, by a majority, is valued as — an independent political nation. To force the question to the point where it would have to be one thing or the other would bring into play all the forces which Orwell recognised in his essays but excluded from the novel. For the agents of paranational military and economic planning Britain has become, in a true example of Newspeak, the UK or Yookay. But for the peoples who live on the actual island there are more real and more valued names and relationships and considerations.

A more serious exclusion

It is in the exclusion of even these traditional elements of resistance to what might seem a logical new order that Orwell, in the novel though usually not in the essays, went most obviously wrong. But there is an even larger error in the exclusion of new forces of resistance: most notably the national-liberation and revolutionary movements of what he knew as the colonial world. The monopoly of nuclear weapons, in the major industrialised states, has not prevented major advances towards autonomy among the 'subject peoples' whose condition he predicted as more hopeless. This is the peculiar unreality of the projection, that the old world powers, newly grouped into superstates, are seen as wholly dominant, and that the rest of the world is merely a passive quarry of minerals and cheap labour. Again, however, what has actually happened is complex. There have been political liberations in this vast area that Orwell reduced to passivity, but there is a limited sense in which what he foresaw has happened: not in superstate wars for its control, but in a complex of economic interventions, by paranational corporations which have some of the technical attributes of superstates; of

political interventions, manoeuvres and 'destabilisations' of exceptionally heavy arms exports to what in the worst cases become client states; and of military interventions, in some cases, where heavy and bloody fighting still excludes the use or threat of use of the nuclear weapons which in the perspective of the 1940s had seemed decisive for either conquest or blackmail.

Thus there has been, in one sense, the 'perpetual war' that Orwell thought likely, but it has been neither of a total nor of a phoney kind. The complex political and economic forces actually engaged have

It is hard to say whether the real 1984 is better or worse than the projected *Nineteen Eighty Four*

prevented the realisation of the apparently simple extrapolations from technical necessity or political ambition. It is sometimes hard to say, at this world-political level, whether the real 1984 is better or worse than the projected *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is more complex, more dynamic, more uncertain than the singular nightmare. Many more people are free or relatively free than the projection allowed, but also many more people have died or are dying in continuing 'small' wars, and vastly more live in danger of annihilation by nuclear war. The rationed and manipulated shortages of the projection have been succeeded by an extraordinary affluence in the privileged nations, and by actual and potential starvation in extending areas of the poor world. It is then not for showing danger and horror that anyone can reproach Orwell. If there is to be reproach, it is for looking so intently in one direction, with its simplified and easily dramatised dangers, that there is an excuse for not looking at other forces and developments which may, in the end, prove to be even more disastrous.

THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

War is Peace is one notable chapter of the Book. As a comment on a perpetual and normalised *state* of war its details may be wrong but its feeling is right. 'We are the peace movement', a British government minister said recently, supporting the next phase of rearmament.

Ignorance is Strength is the other main chapter. This eventually describes the purposes and methods of thought control, but it begins with an analysis of the social structure of the superstates, based on a sort of historical-political theory:

'Throughout recorded time, and probably since the end of the Neolithic Age, there have been three kinds of people in the world, the High, the Middle and the Low. They have been subdivided in many ways, they have borne countless different names, and their relative numbers, as well as their attitude towards one another, have varied from age to age: but the essential structure of society has never altered. Even after enormous upheavals and seemingly irrevocable changes, the same pattern has always reasserted itself...'¹¹

It is at points like this that the status of the Book, in relation to Orwell's own thinking, is most problematic. Many examples could be quoted to show that he understood history as change rather than this abstract recurrence. The point is relevant again when the Book asserts:

'No advance in wealth, no softening of manners, no reform or revolution has ever brought human equality a millimetre nearer.'¹²

This is, as written, such obvious nonsense that the status of the whole argument becomes questionable. If this were really true, there would be no basis for calling Ingsoc a 'perversion'; it would be yet one more example of an inevitable, even innate process.

Clearly Orwell did not believe this, and neither did the author or the authors of the Book, a page or two on. For what is there argued is that while in earlier periods, because of the stage of development of the means of production, 'inequality was the price of civilisation', in the twentieth century 'human equality had become technically possible' with the development of 'machine production'. However, just at that point 'all the main currents of political thought' stopped believing in equality and became authoritarian.

This is an imperfect composition of three incompatible kinds of argument: one from Orwell, one from Burnham and one from Marx. The Marxist proposition of the unavoidable relations between the stages of development of the means of production and the formation of class societies, with the orthodox communist gloss that fully-developed machine production would at last make equality possible, is unmistakably present. The Orwell argument or reservation that much talk of this kind, among its actual representatives, is just a cover for a new authoritarian conspiracy, ending capitalism but then even more thoroughly repressing and controlling the working class, is also evident. But the really discordant element, though it becomes dominant, is from Burnham. As Orwell summarises him in the first essay:

'Every great social movement, every war, every revolution, every political programme, however edifying and Utopian, really has behind it the ambitions of some sectional group which is out to grab power for itself... So that history consists

of a series of swindles, in which the masses are first lured into revolt by the promise of Utopia, and then, when they have done their job, enslaved over again by new masters.'¹³

In the essay Orwell circles hesitantly and intelligently around these crude propositions. He even comments:

'He... assumes that the division of society into classes serves the same purpose in all ages. This is practically to ignore the history of hundreds of years.'¹⁴

And he goes on from this to the Marxist proposition, repeated in the Book, on the relation of class society to methods of production.

What kind of socialism

At the level of Orwell's direct arguments, then, the eventual emphasis of the Book is a known simplification. But it is the combination of this simplification with his own, often reasonable, reservations and suspicions about socialists or nominal socialists who are really authoritarians which determines the social structure of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. His own contribution is then more specific than Burnham's. Burnham had foreseen a 'managerial revolution'. As Orwell summarises:

'Capitalism is disappearing, but Socialism is not replacing it. What is now arising is a new kind of planned, centralised society which will be neither capitalist nor, in any accepted sense of the word, democratic. The rulers of this new society will be the people who effectively control the means of production: that is, business executives, technicians, bureaucrats and soldiers, lumped together by Burnham under the name of 'managers'. These people will eliminate the old capitalist class, crush the working class, and so organise society that all power and economic privilege remain in their own hands. Private property rights will be abolished, but common ownership will not be established.'¹⁵

This is not in any full sense, how things have actually turned out, though there are



elements that are recognisable. But Orwell did not call the new social order Ingman; he called it Ingsoc. Burnham's prediction, and the wider argument of which it is a relatively simple instance, pointed as clearly to fascism and the corporate state, or to what is now called a managed, interventionist post-capitalism, as to an authoritarian communism. It was Orwell who specialised it to a development within the socialist tradition, which it was also betraying. We can then, in 1984, only properly assess the prediction if we pull back to its full context.

In one way it is easy to understand Orwell's narrowing specialisation. Fascism, when he was writing, had just been militarily defeated. Capitalism, he assumed, was finished and deserved to be finished. What then mattered was which kind of socialism would come through, and since his option was for democratic socialism, what he had mainly and even exclusively to oppose was authoritarian socialism.

'The real question is not whether the people who wipe their boots on us during the next fifty years are to be called managers, bureaucrats or politicians: the question is whether capitalism, now obviously doomed, is to give way to oligarchy or to true democracy.'¹⁵

This makes strange reading in 1984, especially if *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is there to tell us to concentrate our attention on Ingsoc and the Party. It is true that within the countries of what is now called 'actually existing socialism' this is broadly how it has turned out. Indeed the only correction we have to make, in that area, is that 'the Party', in that singular ideological sense, has proved to be less significant than the actual combination of technicians, bureaucrats and soldiers which the political monopoly of the Party makes possible and legitimises.

Capitalism's great recovery

But what has really undermined the basis of Orwell's prediction has been the phenomenal recovery of capitalism, which he had seen as 'doomed'. The spectacular capitalist boom from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s falsified virtually every element of the specific prediction. The real standard of living rose for many millions of working people. The main socialist movements, in the old industrial societies, moved steadily towards a consensus with the new, affluent, managed capitalism. Political liberties were not further suppressed, though their exercise became more expensive. The main motor of the boom, in an extraordinary expansion of consumer credit, was a new predominance of financial institutions, which gained in power at the expense of both political and industrial forces. When the boom ended, in depression and the return of mass unemployment, a new oligarchy was plainly in view. The national and international monetary institutions, with their counterparts in the giant parastatal corporations,

¹⁰ *Ibid* IV 8.

¹¹ *Nineteen Eighty-Four* 162.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Collected Essays* IV 176-7.

¹⁴ *Ibid* IV 160.

¹⁵ *Ibid* IV 165.

had established a both practical and ideological dominance which so far from being shaken by the first decade of depression and unemployment was actually reinforced by it. These were the actual forces now 'wiping their boots on us', in the old industrial societies and the new ex-colonial countries alike. Internally and externally they had all the features of a true oligarchy, and a few people, at least, began to learn that 'centralisation' is not just an old socialist nostrum but is a practical process of ever-larger and more concentrated capitalist corporations and money markets. State power, meanwhile, though trying to withdraw from its earlier commitments to common provision for social welfare, has increased at military levels, in the new weapons systems, and in its definitions of law and order and of security (backed up by some intensive surveillance). Thus it is an obvious case of *doublethink* when the radical Right, now in power in so many countries, denounced the state at the level of social welfare or economic justice but reinforce and applaud the state at the level of patriotic militarism, uniform loyalty, and control over local democratic institutions. To hear some of the loudest of these double-mouthed people is to know what is meant, in Newspeak, by a *doubleplusgood duckspeaker*.

But then what about the *proles*? Here again the prediction was quite wrong, though there are a few disillusioned people thinking it might have been right. For the key feature of the new capitalist oligarchy is that it has not left 'eightyfive per cent of the population' to their own devices. On the contrary, it has successfully organised most of them as a market, calling them now not 'proles' but 'consumers' (the two terms are equally degrading). It is true that there is massive provision, by the newspapers and other media of the oligarchy, of the semi-pornography and gambling and mechanical fiction which the Party was supposed to provide. But the real controls are different. A straight contract between disciplined wage-labour and credit-financed consumption was offered and widely accepted. Even as it became unavailable to the many millions who in depression became, in that cruel oligarchic term, 'redundant', its social and political hold, as the essence of any social order, was at first barely disturbed. Indeed the ideological response of the oligarchy was to act to make the contract more secure: by disciplining the trade unions which represented an independent element in its bargaining, beyond oligarchic control; and by identifying as public enemies, in its

newspapers, dissentient political figures (not the 'proper official Opposition' but the 'unofficial' Reds, Wreckers, Extremists, who in good *Nineteen Eighty-Four* style were seen as either mad or guilty of *thoughtcrime*).

POWER AND MOTIVATION

This brings us to the hardest question in a reassessment of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Worried and fascinated by Burnham's arguments that power is the only political reality, whatever phrases may accompany it, Orwell observed:

'It is curious that in all his talk about the struggle for power, Burnham never stops to ask *why* people want power. He seems to assume that power hunger, although only dominant in comparatively few people, is a natural instinct that does not have to be explained.'¹⁶

'A natural instinct that does not have to be explained'? This is the terrifying irrationalism of the climax of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and it is not easy, within the pity and the terror, to persist with the real and Orwell's own question. The point of Burnham's position is to discredit all actual political beliefs and aspirations, since these are invariably covers for naked power or the wish for it. But if this is so, there is not only a cancellation of history — as Orwell in his essay went on to observe. The real variations of what happened, as well as of what was said and believed; are flattened into a meaningless, degrading uniformity of human action. There is also a cancellation of inquiry and argument, and therefore of the possibility of truth, since whatever is said can be instantly translated into the base and cruel reality which it is known to cover. It is not necessary to deny the existence, even the frequent occurrence, of persecution and power and torture 'for their own sake' (meaning, for the private gratification of their executors, rather than for any objective cause) to go on resisting the cancellation of all links between power and policy. And this cancellation *must* be resisted, if only because it would then be pointless to try to distinguish between social systems, or to inquire, discriminately, where this or that system went good or went bad.

Passivity of inevitability

There is plenty of room for disagreement about the social and political systems which make arbitrary power, persecution and torture more or less likely. In the world of the actual 1984 there is so vast an extent of these practices, in social systems otherwise dissimilar — from Chile to Kampuchea, from Turkey and El Salvador to Eastern Europe, and with instances from as close to

home as Belfast — that it is tempting to override the discriminating questions, to recoil from man become brute. Yet it is the two-plus-two kind of reckoning — obstinately factual and truthful, however complex the sums may become — that is then most at risk. There *are* reasons, as outside the fiction Orwell well knew, why there are systems and phases of systems in which, as throughout recorded history, opponents and even inconvenients are imprisoned, tortured and killed; just as there are other systems and phases of systems — nearly all of them modern; nearly all of them achieved by prolonged political argument and struggle — when these brutal short-cuts are lessened or brought under control. Of course Orwell is warning against a modern totalitarian system, developed beyond even Stalin or Hitler. But there is a totalitarian way of warning against totalitarianism, by excluding just those discriminating historical analyses, those veridical political distinctions, those authentic as distinct from assumed beliefs and aspirations, which are a much better protection against it than the irrational projection inspiring either terror or hate. It is useful to remember what he said of Burnham:

'Burnham is trying to build up a picture of terrifying, irresistible power, and to turn a normal political manoeuvre like infiltration into Infiltration adds to the general portentousness.'¹⁷

It can be the same with Ingsoc. As he again said in discussing Burnham's thesis:

'Power worship blurs political judgment because it leads, almost unavoidably, to the belief that present trends will continue.'¹⁸

Yet Orwell himself, always an opponent of privilege and power, committed himself, in the fiction, to just that submissive belief. The warning that the world could be going that way became, in the very absoluteness of the fiction, an imaginative submission to its inevitability. And then to rattle that chain again is to show little respect to those many men and women, including from the whole record Orwell himself, who have fought and are fighting the destructive and ignorant trends that are still so powerful, and who have kept the strength to imagine, as well as to work for, human dignity, freedom and peace. □

¹⁶ *Nineteen Eighty-Four* IV 177.

¹⁷ *Collected Essays* IV 170.

¹⁸ *Ibid* 174.

This extract is taken from the new edition of *Orwell* by Raymond Williams. Previously published as a Fontana Modern Master the new edition contains a substantial new chapter, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four in 1984', and will be published by Flamingo on 16 February at £1.95.

George Orwell

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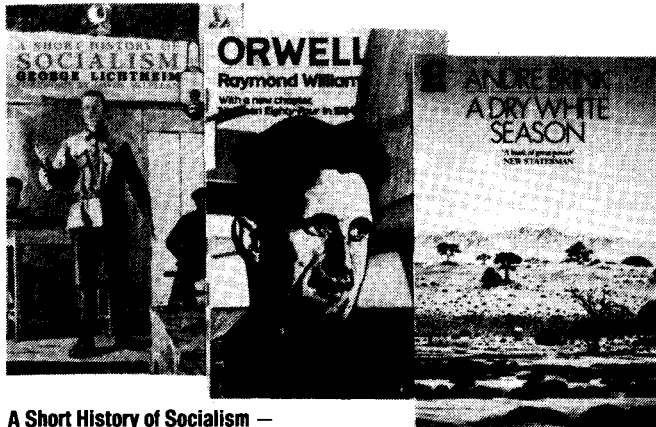


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Be it jogging or TV, aerobics or video, the cultural face of Britain has been revolutionised since the 50s. The only problem is that the Left, by and large, hasn't seen it as particularly important.

Stuart Hall

The Culture Gap

ORWELL WAS WRONG about many things. But one thing he *did* get right was the general relationship between culture and social change. 1984 turns out, whatever its other faults, to be an uncanny anticipation of some major cultural trends in modern society. And the essay he wrote about 'Socialism and the English Genius' in the early years of the war — entitled *The Lion And The Unicorn* — was a brilliant attempt to ground the prospects for a genuinely indigenous British socialism in a reading of the tensions within British national-popular culture. In the actual year, 1984, this is a theme worth returning to.

There are sectors of the Left — especially those touched by the alternative currents of the 1960s — which do understand the relevance of cultural politics to the present conjuncture. They see the connection between cultural questions and the task which socialism has — to become part of everyday life, to make itself 'the common sense of the age'. But the Left as a whole has not distinguished itself in this area. Indeed, one major but neglected factor in the crisis of renewal which faces the Left today is the difficulty it has had keeping pace with the enormous cultural changes which have occurred since the 1950s. This has implications for the Left's ability to relate itself to the society around it *as it is*. It also has consequences for the Left's ability to renew its own vision and perspectives on the future — to imagine the future of socialism in ways which are in touch with the cultural categories the mass of ordinary people use to imagine theirs, as we approach the closing decades of the twentieth century.

The fifties debate

There was a debate along these lines in the dark days of the 1950s when, face to face with the massive consumer boom which flourished under the aegis of Harold Macmillan (remember 'You've Never Had It So Good?'), and after a second defeat at the polls, Labour entered one of its earlier

nights of travail. Can it be, Mr Gaitskell inquired at the Blackpool Conference, that the whole culture on which the labour movement rests — the 'cloth cap' communities of traditional working class areas and occupations — was being eroded by the telly, the fridge, the new car, the washing machine and the glossy magazine.

It is instructive now to recall how that debate went. The Gaitskell view was part of the whole revisionist attack by the Right — the attempt to shift the labour movement into more centrist, 'post-capitalist' paths. It was predicated on the 'embourgeoisement'

consumer capitalism *did* refashion and reshape social relations

thesis — the belief that, with affluence, the working class was becoming middle-class, and that class itself was a fast disappearing phenomenon. Put that way the proposition was patently absurd, as well as politically dangerous. Class relations do not disappear because the particular historic cultural forms in which class is 'lived' and experienced at a particular period, change. On the other hand, because of its resistance to the political strategy and analysis in which the proposition was embedded, the Left was largely driven into an equally untenable — but 'correct' — corner: the defence of 'Clause 4' of the Labour Party Constitution and the denial that *anything* had changed or could change under capitalism. (Clause 4 remains enshrined; though that piece of formalism has actually contributed precious little to deepening the concept of *social* ownership: the statist form of nationalisation has, meanwhile, continued to decline into widespread unpopularity, even amongst socialists).

A cultural revolution

Failing to think the thing through, because they did not accept the categories of analysis which the Right provided, the Left too found itself boxed in. For, in fact, as we

all know now, the slow, uneven, contradictory impact of consumer capitalism *did* refashion and reshape social relations and cultural attitudes quite widely and irrevocably. Contrary to the popular view on the Left, there is nothing 'un-Marxist' about that proposition. Capitalism, throughout its history, has constantly restructured itself, and the cultural relations in which we are all netted. The fact that it is a deeply exploitative system has never prevented it from continuing, even in the midst of crisis, to be a *dynamic* system, constantly revolutionising the ground off which it lives.

British society — and thus the labour movement which is part of it — was extensively reshaped, culturally, by the long postwar boom, the most sustained period of expansion certainly this century. And, though the rhythm of capitalist development since then has been more uneven, the consequences of this reshaping have not disappeared. Nor, indeed, has its dynamic. The new technologies have not failed to emerge because the old technologies are falling apart. The growth in mass consumption, though it did not destroy or overturn the barriers of class divided society, did profoundly modify everyday life-patterns, the social experience and expectations and the lived universe of the majority of ordinary people. One can find evidence of this in a hundred everyday ways — in the new kinds of modern conveniences which found their way into ordinary homes; in the changes in patterns of leisure, entertainment, holidays; in shifts in patterns of drinking and entertainment, or food consumption. The areas most visible to public comment at the time — and impossible to deny — lay in the new youth culture — the revolution in musical tastes, styles of dress and modes of behaviour.

A transformation in living

It is, of course, perfectly true that participation in the new mass consumer culture was and is very one-sided, and by no means a universal experience. Its distribution was highly skewed — often in

predictable class ways. Certainly, the system has not been able to sustain this level of popular consumption — though, as a result of the bargaining strength of the unions, money wages were maintained for a long period, into at least the early 1970s. The 'splurge' was one-sided in another, deeper sense. It was 'mass participation' principally through personal consumption in the mass market — a feature which undoubtedly strengthened the daily experience of 'the market as provider', running counter to, and often at the expense of, more socially responsible, welfare-oriented, common provision. This may well have also strengthened modern forms of 'possessive individualism' and privatisation. That is certainly the negative side.

On the other hand — to take but one area only — it transformed the immediate lives of many working class (and other) women, who would never have come into the labour market or broken some of the leading-strings of domestic drudgery without modern appliances in the home; and who may therefore be forgiven for refusing to regret their appearance simply because they bought these appliances, when they could afford them, from Rumbelows rather

social labour itself has matured and developed, are still not available in sufficient amounts to the working people who produced them and need them!

Trolley warfare at Tesco

The foundations of class society were not destroyed by the high wage, high spend market-oriented consumer society which came into existence in this period — it would be absurd to overestimate the shifts which occurred. But it would also be quite wrong to imagine that its effects culturally have been totally eroded by the fact that the system is now in deep depression or that people can't afford all the new goods and services they would like to be able to buy. The new trends helped to remould habits, patterns, the models of everyday life. And these have a profound impact on what people now expect; on the threshold of their aspirations and expectations, on how they lead their daily lives.

This underlying drift of cultural change, producing a more loosely-textured, more diffuse and diverse daily experience (not, for that reason, a less exploited one), has never been properly analysed or drawn into the political calculations of the Left. I believe, myself, that over time it made a

state welfare benefits. What did change in the 1960s and 1970s was this rhythm of gratitude and deference. There is nothing 'respectful' about Tesco's or Sainsbury's. If you want a trolley, you had better hustle on in there, pay your money and take your choice. *Of course*, if the consumer sharks or the bargain-today boys could rip you off, so they would. No one could have any illusions — or require any monetarist instruction — about the character of trading in the mass market. But at least you aren't required to tug your forelock and look 'deserving' as you approach the till.

Double-sided and contradictory

The resistance on the Left arose in part from a failure to predict the possibility of capitalism's postwar recovery — against the background of the 30s depression and the influence of a sort of Leninist law of inevitable capitalist crisis and decline; and partly from a failure to understand the double-sided and contradictory nature of mass capitalism. The Left was not incorrect in seeing the massive manipulation, the advertising hype, the ballyhoo, the loss of quality, the up- and down-market division, which are intrinsic to commercial consumerism. The difficulty was that this manipulative side was *all* that was seen. But, of course, since the inception of commercial capitalism and the drawing of all relations into the net of market transactions, there has been little or no 'pure' culture of the people — no wholly separate folk-realm of the authentic-popular, where 'the people' existed in their pure state, outside of the corrupting influences. The people have always had to make something out of the things the system was trying to make them into. People therefore used some of the opportunities opened up to widen their area of experience and choice, at the same time and in the same moment as their hard-earned wages circulated back through the tills and the ad markets into the coffers of the new entrepreneurs.

Consumer capitalism works by working the markets; but it cannot entirely determine what alternative uses people are able to make of the diversity of choices and the real advances in mass production which it also always brings. If 'people's capitalism' did not liberate the people, it nevertheless 'loosed' many individuals into a life somewhat less constrained, less puritanically regulated, less strictly imposed than it had been three or four decades before. Of course the market has not remained buoyant and expansive in this manner. But the capacity, for a time, of the



Kids in Hamleys computer department

than the Co-op. As an aside: there is, sometimes, in the reaction of the Left to these matters, an inverted puritanism which hardly bears inspection. Middle class socialists, heaving under the weight of their new hi-fis, their record collections, their videos and strip pine shelving, cheap prints and chinese lanterns sometimes seem to prefer 'their' working class poor but *pure*: unsullied by contact with the market. Yet the only tenable position for a true cultural materialist must be a deep sense of outrage that the fruits of modern industry, technology and know-how, which

considerable contribution to the resistance to the more *statist* features of welfare-state socialism. It strengthened what Ralph Miliband has called the trend towards 'de-subordination'. I mean the loss of deference of an older and more paternalist kind which, in its modern form, was a strong feature of welfarism. Clients of the welfare state were expected, by Labour and Tory councils alike, not to push and shove for their rights, but to be *grateful* for what has been done for and to them. What did not change was the numbers of people who could not survive without the crutch of

system to pioneer expansion, to drive and develop new products and maximise new choices, while at the same time creaming off its profit margins, was seriously underestimated. Thus the Left has never understood the capacity of the market to become identified in the minds of the mass of ordinary people, not as fair and decent and socially responsible (that it never was), but as an expansive popular system.

Trends of tomorrow

Another reason for the Left's resistance to cultural change probably derives from the belief that the market has delivered most — as it usually does — only to those who already have the market advantages of wealth, power, status and influence: the sense that what we have been talking about is, for the majority of ordinary people beset by the harsh necessities of life, a *minority* experience. But is it? It certainly wasn't in the long boom. And while the recession prevents the mass of people from participating to the same degree on a regular or stable basis, it certainly does not prevent them, when they can, from wanting — and often having — not yesterday's but today's goods, both for themselves and their children. Television is now a majority interest and video could soon be. Britain is the largest market in Western Europe for the sale of personal computers, just as, for better or worse, the move to computer languages and thinking through video games is a mass, not a minority privileged interest, for children and young people. In part, of course, this is the product of a massively capitalised swamp advertising campaign. But more importantly it is also a perfectly correct perception that this is where modern technology is, these are languages of calculation of the future.

We must not confuse the practical inability to afford the fruits of modern

they bought these appliances from Rumbelow's rather than the Co-op

industry with the correct popular aspiration that modern people know how to use and master and bend to their needs and pleasures modern things. Not to recognise the dialectic in this is to fail to see where real people are in their heads. A labour movement which cannot identify with what is concrete and material in these popular aspirations, and expropriate them from identification with the private market and private appropriation, will look, increasingly, as if it is trapped nostalgically in



You pay your money and you take your choice

ancient cultural modes, failing to imagine socialism in twentieth century terms and images, and increasingly out of touch with where real people are at. What the Left often sees only as minority trends have long since become majority aspirations. The question is, in what political environment are these aspirations to be developed and realised? Is it really only the capitalist market and consumerism as a way of life which can connect with them?

The style of the Left

The Left's resistance to cultural change is reflected in our everyday practices and languages. The style of propaganda, party political broadcasts, of much educational and agitational material locks us into very traditional and backward-looking associations. Our political imagery is even worse in this respect. We virtually fought the 1983 election on the 1945 political programme. I am not suggesting that the Left can survive without a sense of history. Our own people know too little, not too much history. But developing a real popular historical consciousness on the Left is *not* the same thing as thinking the present in the language and imagery of the past.

Of course, there are many exceptions to this — I am deliberately exaggerating. The alternative left currents of the 1960s were markedly different in their willingness to expropriate to the uses of the Left the language, imagery and technologies of the present. And they did use these, with effect, to project, if not a hegemonic vision of the future, then certainly a powerfully alternative vision to what already existed.

Many of those who pioneered these new modes of communication remain committed to the Left, willing and anxious to put their talents and services at the disposal, not just of small campaigns and one-issue causes, but of the whole movement. They are a key sector of modern intellectuals the mass labour movement needs to bring over to its side and harness to a popular political project. Organisations pioneering a new relationship between power and the people, like the GLC, have demonstrated what can be achieved in the course of this kind of mobilising of new sectors and new skills

From the NHS to the Marathon and Aerobics

What is at issue here isn't a matter simply of goods, commodities, and technology. It is also a matter of attitudes and practices. Culture has never consisted of things — only of the particular pattern of relations established through the social use of things and techniques. Here again, it is a general failure of the Left to see and make contact with the popular and democratic elements in daily life, because of the forms in which they are presently packaged or observed. Take, for example, the current craze for body maintenance, the widening concern about questions of health, exercise, an unpolluted environment and the influence of ecological considerations. This appears as a spontaneous popular movement in civil society, ahead of rather than sponsored by 'the authorities'. It can look rather like a mere personalised fad — biological Do-It-Yourself: very apolitical and retreatist. And yet, they touch very popular attitudes indeed, and form part of a distinctively contemporary consciousness. These attitudes arise, in part, from an awareness that the ecological environment is as much of a social enterprise as other, more mundane aspects; that social irresponsibility arises as much in the exploitation of community health as it does in the exploitation of labour power. They may take a more personal form — and that, in itself, tells us something about the disillusionment with *statism* and the idea of the providing state as the bearer of socialism. But they belong to exactly the same complex which led to the foundation of the National Health Service in the 1940s and its massive popular defence in the 1980s. It represents an important ideological current: not the refusal of the welfare state as such but the correct view that state-provided social programmes only become part of a more democratic movement when matched by equivalent movements of self-activity in civil society itself. Raymond Williams

once remarked that the 'long revolution' consisted in the slow reach for popular control.

From smoking to Mother Earth

The ecological and environmental impulse has, in addition to its own intrinsic democratic potential, links with much wider, and more obviously 'political' trends. It has a powerful link with the pro-abortion movement, and with feminism and its commitment to enlarge the freedom of women to control their own lives. But it also has connections to the growth of health and safety legislation, a

highly significant advance in trade union work in recent years, and one where the unions can clearly be seen, not simply as defensive, but as advancing into and laying down the conditions of work and life in modern industry. To take another small example, it has links with the taking of responsibility for the public environment of others in the anti-smoking campaign. To take a very large instance, the whole thrust has clear links with the peace movement and the deepening sense of our interdependence in survival and the finite nature of 'Planet Earth'.

Yet — because of the more personalised

and apolitical form of this ecological and environmental impulse — this is a cultural movement from which the Left and the labour movement have remained, until now, largely insulated. But the forging of links is not inconceivable, especially against the background of other countries. Whatever one may say about the 'historic compromise' policies of the Italian CP, it has remained a mass, popular force — as compared, say, with the disastrous and understandable drop in popularity of the French Party. And one of the reasons for this is that the PCI understands that it must maintain a popular presence. That

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there is no popular occasion, no popular festival, no issue or cause about which the masses feel and no emergent movement in mass society where the Left can afford not to be *present*. Why should socialism be a popular political force when it is not a force in the popular cultures and aspirations of the masses? Again, the fact that things can be done, even in more reticent Britain, along these lines is evidenced by the popular identifications which CND and to a lesser extent GLC, have begun to forge. We need more not less; across a wider spectrum of activities; and as part of the building of a self-active, democratic popular force, not as mere fancy opportunism.

Thatcherism and the market

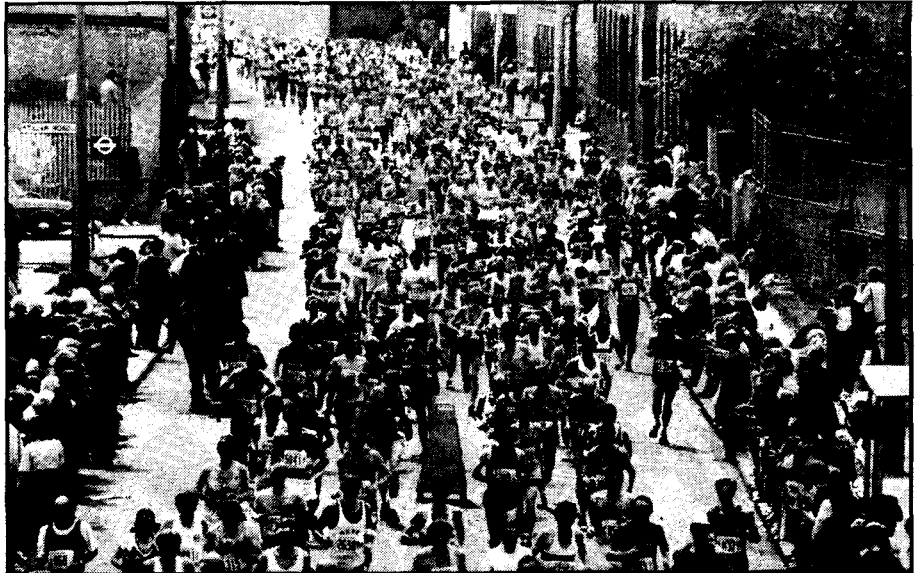
Horrendously, the Right has been far more successful in recent years than the Left in connecting with some of these popular movements and trends in civil society. Of course, they have connected with them in their own populist way. The intention of the radical Right, which has been most penetrative, has not been the conversion of masses to the religion of the market and unemployment. Rather, it has been the subtle capacity to identify the positive aspirations of people *with* the market and the restoration of the capitalist ethic, and to present this as a natural alliance. Thatcherism has been remarkably successful at moving the counters around so as to forge a connection between the popular aspiration for greater freedom from constraining powers and the market definition of freedom. It has created a chain of equivalences between the reaction against state bureaucracy, so deeply inscribed in the Fabian version of social democracy, and the quite different passion for self-sufficiency, self-help and rampant individualism. But, like all ideological and political interventions — which is what Thatcherism is — these connections are neither 'natural' nor necessary. They represent an attempt to inflect and expropriate and

It is part of the Right project to turn the tide on every front

absorb what are often democratic currents into free market channels. We have suggested already how and why in the earlier period the market came to be a popular mass experience. The Right, after all, has no hang-ups about making money and stimulating the instinct for money making as the driving force of society. In simple terms, that is what the capitalist

system *is*. So to address itself to isolating and developing the competitive side of that contradictory experience was an obvious and natural way for the radical Right to align itself with popular aspirations or, to put it another way, make itself populist. This is one feature of the wider phenomenon we have seen in this decade of the Right showing itself once again capable of recuperating itself, renewing itself, taking on the challenge of the social democratic consensus and eroding its basis, and

whom the labour movement now needs to forge real alliances in action at the grass-roots level. But it is an argument for not seeing these existing constituencies in anachronistic cultural terms. Blacks, for example, in addition to being massively unemployed and socially oppressed have constructed a whole culture of resistance around the appropriation of modern sounds and advanced technological equipment. It is patronising to imagine them as if they only just came down from the



Exercise has become more popular— the London marathon

learning once again to address the people in accents which seem to groove more naturally with life as they live and experience it. This is the naturalisation of the Right which has proved the real changed ground on which the Left in the 1980s has been forced to operate. It is part of the Right project to turn the tide on every front — in civil society and moral life as much as in economic habits and expectations. Its project, in short, is to become hegemonic, to address the common experience, to speak to and for 'the nation'.

After 1984

The question is whether the Left can also operate on the same ground, turn these popular experiences and emergent attitudes and aspirations to *its* advantage. Or whether its only alternative is to become aligned with important but increasingly minority and traditional constituencies which need defence in the face of the current onslaught, goodness knows, but which are not where the mass experience of the common people any longer is at. This is not an argument for abandoning either the traditional Labour constituencies or those particularly hard-pressed and disadvantaged minorities with

technological tree. Also, it is an argument for recognising the complexity and diversity of cultural experience in Britain today and developing strategies which address the mass common experience, which project a programme on behalf of the majority and begin to conceive the future in ways which will connect with the perspectives of the whole society. The approach which takes a rather patronising tone to where ordinary people are at, and addresses them as if 'we' know better — by no means unknown in labour movement circles and, in sectarian form, in the Left as a whole — only serves to marginalise the Left from the parameters and circumstances of everyday life which ordinary people inhabit as a fact of daily modern existence. The democratisation of the labour movement's own practices is the point from which the broader movement will stem. It would be fatal if the Left became so disconnected from what that daily existence is really like — not just in Brixton or Clydeside but in less depressed areas of the south east or of London — that it appeared too out of touch to speak pertinently to anyone about how things might be for socialism after 1984. □

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It is now generally accepted that George Orwell chose the date 1984 by reversing the last two digits of the year in which his novel was written.

David Edgar

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were all set to different time-zones. Harold looked nervously around as he waited for the entry phone to be answered. Eventually it was: he gave the codeword (which today was 'primogeniture'), and he passed quickly into the building as an empty Budweiser can crashed into the wall above his head, fell, and clattered down an open manhole.

Inside the concourse all was clean, and plush and quiet: a million miles removed, it seemed, from the degradation of San Carlos Square just beyond the electronic entrances. (The square was in Islington; it had once been called Mandela, or Mugabe, or some such name: but all that had changed when the Commissioners had taken over from the 'borough council' in the later 80s). Harold was searched, took the lift to the 16th floor, and held up his ID in front of the securiscope, before the mistress of the house deactivated the lasalarm and let him in.

It was his first day working for this couple. They had rung the agency at short notice, wanting a man for 'general duties', and as Harold had only worked for seven days in five weeks, it was welcome, whatever 'general duties' were. His speciality was butling (the agency called it 'stewarding'), but he could turn his hand to ushering, or valeting, or even gardening, and at least the job would last for several days. The next five weeks or so were bad ones for the supply servant trade: with all those public holidays (Jubilee Day, Royal Wedding Day, and next week, naturally, Belgrano Day) you were lucky if you did a full week in the months of May or June.

Nice couple, Harold thought. The point, the mistress said, was that nanny, housekeeper and both the maids had taken William and Dorothy to Merionethshire, and Sue and Bryan were needing somebody to keep the place, you know, just ticking over, for a week or two, until they'd all return. And if he could come in daily, do the plants, switch the freezer over to the generator if the national grid went down (when the grid goes down, laughed Bryan),

and keep the place in shape, then that would be just fine.

At which point Bryan checked his worldwatch, announcing that if he didn't get to work before the markets closed in Delhi they would have his guts for garters. But he'd be back for sure by eighteen GMT.

(Harold knew, of course, that Bryan would not leave the building as he, Harold, had entered it: he would take the lift down to the basement car park, past the service concourse, and drive out through the electronic doors, which would close like a jaw behind him, and off he'd go, past the garbage and the pot-marked pavements and the open manholes, as if he and his family didn't really live in Islington at all).

By 9.00 (by normal British time, thought Harold, sniffily), the flat was empty. Everything was clear. All servant agencies now signed an anti-theft agreement with their clients, and although half your pay was docked against temptation, an agency like Harold's still suffered quite substantial losses. Harold however was known for his punctilious honesty (too stupid to steal, people at the agency remarked) and so was one of the few people on the books to be trusted with a job which gave him free run of someone else's home. He started in the kitchen.

The flat was large, and well-equipped, with a gym and a solarium. The master, clearly, was a banker: Chase Manhattan, probably, or maybe First National of Tokyo, or even Intermid or EuroWest. Madam, she'd said, was in the civil service (which she'd admitted quite apologetically, as if it was something to be vaguely ashamed of, like being a pornographer or a sociologist). She hadn't told him which of the four ministries she worked for, but from her general demeanour he could guess. He chuckled as he took the pulses out of soak. He could remember when the Government was like an octopus, its interfering tentacles were everywhere (the Government owned factories and mines, and even built the roads!). But then, as her last gesture before retirement, the Great Aunt (as she was still affectionately known) had rigorously rolled back the ever-expanding

agencies, reducing them to a manageable four. The first was the Department of Security, which ran the army, the police, and dealt with foreign governments; the second was the Department of the Budget, which dealt with all financial matters (it had once been called 'The Treasury', but that implied an open crock of gold, whereas the word 'budget' implied frugality and thrift). The third was the Department of the Family, which dealt with education, health and poor relief, and the final ministry, the Department of the Government, had started life as the Prime Minister's private office, but now oversaw all operations, and since 1986 had been responsible for the work of the Commissioners who ran the cities and the towns. The Departments were colloquially referred to as DOS, DOB, DOF and DOG, and Mrs was undoubtedly a Doffer, probably one of those busybodies who oversaw the FPG.

'Busybodies'. Harold smiled, as he cleared away the carrot juice and bran from the breakfast bar. He was beginning to sound like Jane, who was always railing against this or that. In fact, he'd voted for the Union Party solidly for nearly 20 years, back from the days when it was called 'Conservative'. Whereas in her time Jane had at least considered voting for the lot: the Labour Party, naturally, and the Democratic Labour Party, and the Labour Party (Tribunite), and the Labour Party For The Pact (and the Labour Party heartily opposed to same); but also for the Alliance, and the Alliance (Owenite) and the Liberals and the National Liberals, not to mention all the various varieties of Social Democrat (from 'Real' to 'True' to 'Genuine') that had mushroomed in the wake of '88. In fact, the opposition (or, the 'other parties', if the truth be told) had consistently got higher national votes, and indeed collectively won far more seats, than had been mustered by the Union. But as the largest single non-Governmental group was never more than 70, and each felt personally betrayed by all the others, it didn't make much odds.

Jane didn't take this view. She felt the opposition parties should unite again, as they had in 1988, during the brief

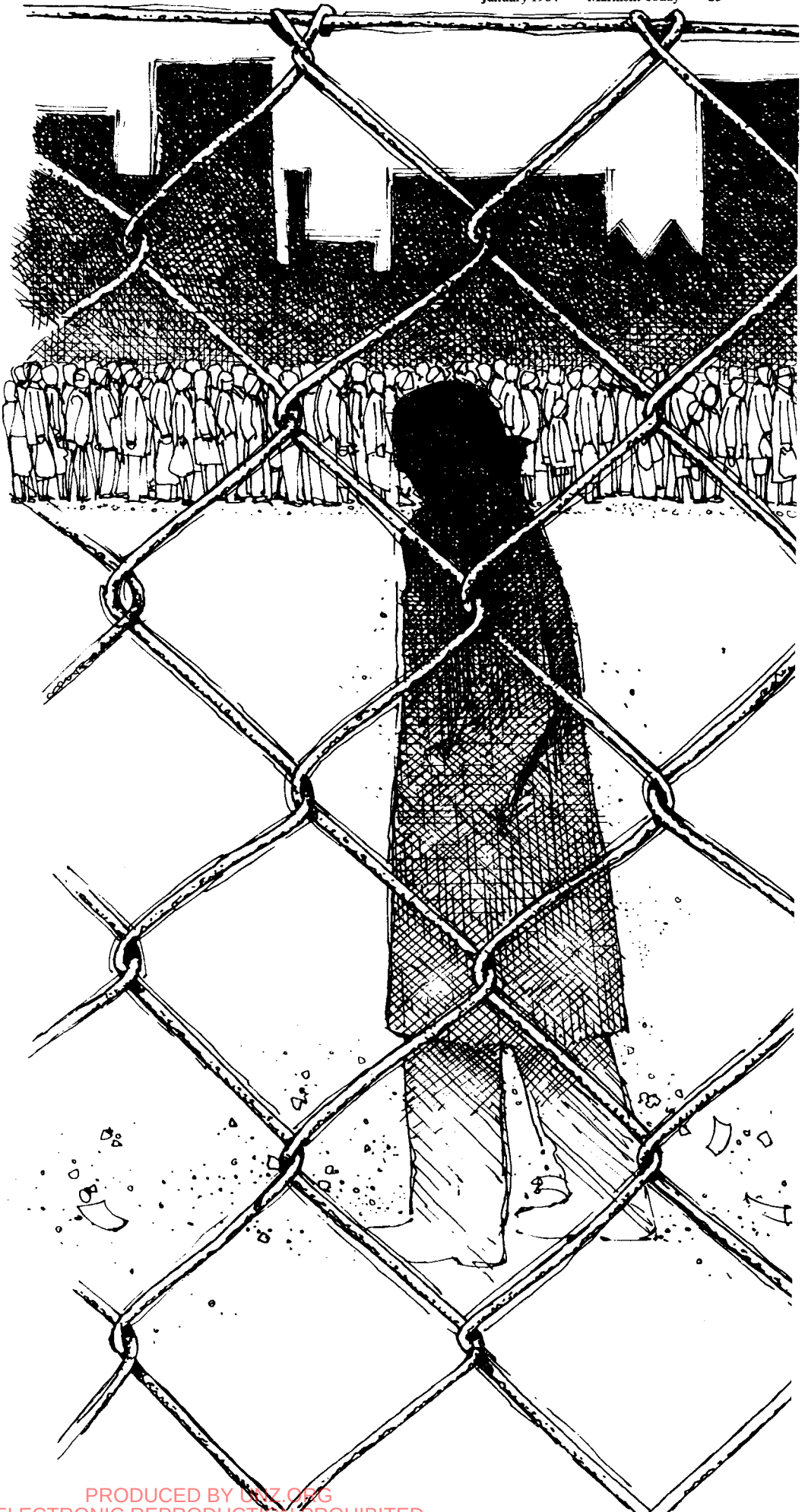
Thanks to Eve Brook and Bob Rowthorn for many of the ideas contained in this story.

Labour-led administration that had provoked such violence and hostility, both without and within its ranks. (Jane understood the jargon of the parties, and so knew why 'pactist' had become such an insult, worse even than 'Hobsbawmist', to which 'pactism' was connected in ways disputed by all groups and factions, including the 'Hobsbawmists' themselves). She felt that nearly 20 years of virtually uninterrupted Union rule had been a disaster for the country, and while Harold didn't agree, he could understand Jane's point of view. She had been born in Liverpool, then a thriving industrial town (even a city). By the late 80s, however, the only real industry left was one unprivatised car manufacturer, left in business as a kind of memento mori for the bad old days (like the one state-owned pit in Rotherham, or the one remaining shipyard on the Clyde). The factory was small and its products massively subsidised by the DOB: but at least it allowed the town to stay sufficiently alive to sustain a minimal level of services, of hospitals and shops and cinemas and schools. Most of the inhabitants of Liverpool, indeed (and the same was true of Leeds and Wolverhampton) were engaged in selling increasingly mediocre and threadbare services and things, not to the outside world, but to each other. And so while all the young and ambitious had long since moved down south (to populate the shanty-towns on Hampstead Heath and Clapham Common), there was this kind of ghost economy remaining in the northern counties, to sustain the ageing population as their once-great cities crumbled quietly around them.

So he could understand how Jane must feel. Her place of birth had once been larger than Northampton; and indeed both Manchester and Coventry had once been much, much bigger than Buckingham or even Norwich. But, as the Great Aunt had so often pointed out, cities like Liverpool and Bradford — far from the European ports, their infrastructure in decay, surrounded by bleak countryside — were unviable in the contemporary world, and there came a point when natural sentiment must give way to the harsh realities of modern times.

He heard a discreet buzz, and looked up at the worldclock. It was 6.00 in Washington, and time to take a coffee break.

At least, in casual work, you could take a break (you couldn't smoke a fag, of course, in a job like this: indeed the doorman frisked you for your packet when you first arrived). In the FEZs, you worked a straight six hours, and woe betide you if



nature called. The FEZs (the acronym stood for 'Free Enterprise Zone') were set up in the 80s, to encourage business back to the inner cities, by offering tax and rates and customs concessions, and by exempting firms from all those irritating rules and regulations which had made it so prohibitively difficult to make an honest profit in the past. Now, within the older southern cities (the few FEZs in the north had been dismantled following the long hot summers of 1987 and 1991), the Zones provided almost all the industrial employment, and they even still had unions, and closed shops of a sort (despite the Bill of Rights, which had banned closed shops, as well as guaranteeing everybody's right to purchase private medicine and education). So although you had to work much harder than you'd had to in the old days (and there was nothing wrong with *that*) you got high wages, and the jobs were highly prized, and even sometimes fought over, which explained the wire fences and the checkpoints at the entrances. And with things being as they were, the unions were prepared to turn a blind eye to the upsurge in industrial accidents, which had resulted (malcontents would claim), from the repeal (within the Zones) of the more ludicrously restrictive provisions of the Factory Acts.

Harold sipped his decaff. In the old days, he'd have read the paper, but of course now you could only do that on a screen, and although Madam had said he could use the VDU, he wasn't quite sure he could make it work. He didn't have one in his flat (you couldn't get a rent rebate if you could afford to rent a receiver or a quadro, which, when you thought about it, was quite fair and reasonable), and the channels were proliferating now at such a rate he didn't understand the system any more. He knew that the old channels — ITV 1-16 — could still be received by everybody, but that for 'minority' networks like the ITNs and BBC, you had to pay. But how you got NBC, or British Satellite (1-17), or Home and Garden (1-6), or ITS (1-9) for Sport, particularly on the ICC (the Independent Control Console, which you pointed at the screen, and pressed a button, and things happened), let alone how you could talk directly to the bank, or to the shops, or to your mother (like as not), or call up Mirrorscreen or Sunscope, was a mystery.

Still, he would have a go. It took some time to find the 'on' switch, and what came 'on' was a list of figures about 'future softs', but by dint of much pressing of the ICC, the channels did start flashing by, and he recognised the logos of the 16 ITVs — which were showing quiz games — and that

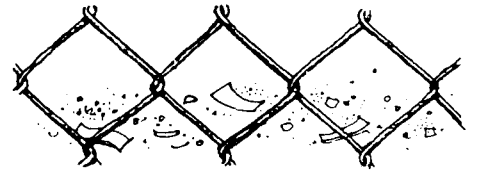
must be NBC (a film about rich people in America) or ABC (a play about the wealthy in the United States) or CBS (a serial apparently concerned with the moneyed classes of the USA). And then he passed both Mirrorscreen and Sunscope (which were both announcing details of a competition), and Expresserama and The Daily Mailout (which were broadcasting the winning numbers of a lottery), and he'd have liked to stop, but the ICC appeared to be stuck on channel change, and so on he went, through seven snooker channels and some cricket and the racing live from Munich and through all the ITNs (which were showing maps and charts and little blue and yellow arrows and parliamentary figures jumping up and down and shouting and interviews with high-ups from the DOS) and by now he was developing a headache and at last he found the off-switch and with a kind of sigh the screen went dark and Harold was alone with just his thoughts for company once more.

'Communications', Harold thought, as he dusted round the maids' room. The age of information, the age of universal contact, the world a pulsating, electronic spider's web, with Tokyo as near as Tottenham. Yet somehow he felt, himself, that his horizons had grown narrower and narrower. You couldn't even move about as much as you'd been able to before. They'd stopped running third class on the daytime trains entirely (the executive class passengers had protested at the 'louts and hooligans' who used to shout and play loud music in the cocktail bars), and since Spaghetti Junction had been declared unsafe for traffic the motor coach network had become restricted to a limited area of the south-east and south-west. And even telephones were less efficient than they had been: the 'basic service' (reluctantly provided by ITT, as a condition for their exclusive Government communications franchise) provided only local calls, and the long-distance option, once again, was on the DOF list of 'inessential luxuries' that relief recipients were not entitled to possess.

So Harold felt quite isolated from the world around him, and the sense of all that information on the VDU, just beyond his fingertips, provoked a spasm of impatient anger. Yet, really, if he thought about it, why did *he* need to know what was happening in Singapore, or Spain? Why indeed should *he* feel he had the right (on transport systems paid for by the taxpayers) to bomb around the country as and when he pleased? And was there not indeed an argument that the explosion

of communications, into every home, had contributed to the moral atrophy that led ill-educated youths to loot and riot? (To see something on the VDU was to feel entitled to it, as the Parent Power Groups so often pointed out). Was it *not* better for the masses not to know about the riches heaped behind the window-meshes and beyond the locked and power-bolted doors?

The quiet, discreet buzz once again broke through his reverie. Good God, he thought. It was already 9 pm in Sydney. Time for lunch.



'Lunch' was a peeling sandwich in a grimy wine bar. (The place had not been decorated since the early 80s: the art deco lampshades were all grey with grime, and sad remains of ferns lay wilted in the jardinieres). The VDU was (oddly) tuned not to the ITS but to the news — those little blue and yellow arrows once again — but the hubbub was too great for him to hear the news-host's words. He sipped the cheap, keg reisling (wine was much cheaper than beer now, after pressure from the European Agricultural Community). In one corner sat three FEZ-workers, looking nervously around them (they'd just received their fat pay-packets, and this was a high-crime area). In another was a group of young men in NNP uniform, who'd been celebrating (or drowning sorrows) with a jug of Heineken.

Harold's son was in the NNP. The New Nation Programme was a compulsory scheme for the nation's youth, which ran from the school leaving age (whether 14 or above) until the age of 20. In theory, military conscription was a voluntary option, and indeed, if you showed an electronic aptitude, or could prove your 'social skills', it was easy to avoid the army. But most kids from places like round here ended up in uniform, as indeed had Harold's son, who had gained a place at the North East London Polytechnic's bright new Faculty of Imperial Studies (he wished to specialise in the achievements of the British Raj), until the crisis of Harold's marriage had made the payment of the fees impossible.

It had all been most unfortunate, but it was really no one's fault. Harold's wife had been born in the West Indies, and during his long early 90s period of unemployment, she had taken on responsibility for the

household bills (although fiscal policy was intended to encourage women to fulfill their primary responsibilities as wives and mothers, the repeal of Equal Pay Acts and the abolition of the wages councils had made them peculiarly attractive to employers in the retail trade). Unfortunately, things had got quite out of hand (commitments had been entered into foolishly while Harold was in work) and she was eventually faced — as so many had been — with the choice of prison for default, or applying to the VRP. (The Voluntary Repatriation Programme, set up under what was usually called the Proctor/Winterton amendment, was intended to assist the passage home of immigrants who found it hard to adapt themselves to British ways). And so, to use the jargon, Harold's wife was volrepped to Jamaica, and he was faced with a level of backpayments which made his fantasies about his son seem the most grandiose of delusions.

For two years, Harold had lived alone, in considerable privation (to discourage fickle attitudes to having children out of wedlock, the rules relating to relief entitlements for the single unemployed with children were peculiarly stringent). Then, somewhat to his own surprise, he took what he could only call a mistress. His natural instinct was to marry (like the Government, he took a dim view of adultery), but under the Divorce Law 1989 (which sought to reaffirm the full solemnity of the marriage vows), there were no provisions for annulment unless adultery or cruelty were proved by one party against the other (for blame must lie somewhere) and although Harold did suspect, deep in his bones, that cruelty had been involved, somewhere along the line, he could not see that it applied to him or to his wife, and so the marriage was, at least until the five year separation clause came into play, irrevocable.

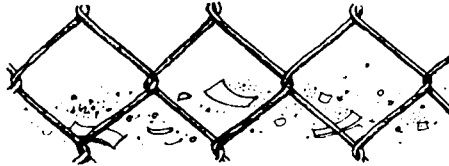
Harold's mistress was called Jane. She'd been a 'social worker' (a group of state employees whose job had been to encourage the inadequate to consider that they were 'entitled' to be paid for doing nothing) and a 'feminist' (a political persuasion which held that women were 'oppressed' by the people who looked after them). She had been rationalised in 1994, as part of the DOF's 'Stand On Your Own Feet' policy (or the 'Stew In Your Own Juice' scheme, as Jane had put it, but then, after all, she would).

Before that, however, she'd met Harold. He'd got a little drunk one evening, as he was the first to admit, and she'd been called out to the police station after he'd been

picked up sprawling in the street. It had been the night his daughter died, but of course that was no excuse for his behaviour.

Harold looked around him. He was not an emotional man, but thoughts of his daughter always brought a tear into his eye, and he was fearful that it would be noticed. It had been his fault of course: the point of the abolition of all that irksome red tape governing small shopkeepers (who found it hard enough to make ends meet) was quite precisely so the forces of the market rather than interfering busybodies from the ministries could weed out those whose services were inadequate in any way.

It had been a can of meat, from the corner grocer. He'd been 'in a hurry', and he wasn't well, so he hadn't eaten any of it himself. There had been scares about tin cans before, but you never thought that this could happen to you or to your family. But somehow, it was not sufficient — really not *sufficient* — that in protest at the killing of his daughter he could henceforth shop elsewhere.



But despite their unpropitious meeting, Jane had liked him (he'd been — she said still was — a handsome man). And one of those strange unexpected likings started, and led on to one of those even more unexpected loves. And although her views were at best eccentric and at worst downright dangerous, their affection grew and deepened.

It was inevitably clandestine. Jane had not found a new position, and she relied on state relief, and the rules against cohabitation were if anything more strict than they had been in the 70s and 80s (and the FPG was everywhere, of course, aided and abetted by those helpful citizens, the Checkers). And even if they did risk a night together, with much sneaking in and out, then there was still the danger of conception, to take the edge of ease and pleasure off their union. (The Government was particularly concerned about the birthrate among those classes of population generally agreed to be least competent to bring up children, and having failed to introduce legislation making it mandatory on doctors to put 'high-risk' young women on the pill, had developed a whole network of proscriptions which at the least made pregnancy a major crisis, for anyone who had at any time been wholly or partly dependent on relief, which meant, now, almost

two thirds of the population. Thus, for such people, 'family aid' — once called 'child benefit' — *reduced* with each new child, the parish housing lists were weighted against the 'irresponsibly fertile', and even midwifery insurance rates were set artificially high. But all of these mild irritations could be instantly removed — one might say, at a stroke — if you participated in the DOF's magnanimous STORC programme, which provided generous, low-interest and long-term loans for 'Surgical Termination of the Reproductive Capability').

So their love-life was at best a nervy business. But he enjoyed their time together, he loved listening to her as she lectured him about the world, and even (on occasions) felt there was something in the things she had to say. For Jane, it had all begun with the development of 'the multinational corporations' (how she could use the jargon with a straight face was a mystery!) and their understanding that all the tiresome controls which so bedevilled business in the West could be avoided by the simple project of moving processes and plant elsewhere. At first, this happened *within* countries, (the move from Michigan and Indiana to the sun-belt, the flight from Lancashire and Yorkshire to East Anglia). But then, the corporations realised that this scheme could be internationally applied, by moving plant to southern Europe or to Mexico, and then indeed half-way across the world, to wherever labour was cheapest and most plentiful and pliable, which was why the fastest growing economies were no longer the oil-states, or even South Korea and Taiwan, but Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

This was not to say, of course, that no wealth remained within the 'first world', indeed that's where the *wealth* was, but it did mean that the numbers who had access to it had become geographically as well as socially reduced, to the south and western USA (Phoenix was now larger than Chicago), to Japan and South Korea (Seoul was now richer than Toronto), and to a rough quadrangle in the middle of North-West Europe, bounded by Bristol, Bordeaux, Milan and Cologne (the fate of cities like Hamburg and Vienna had been similar to that of Glasgow and New York). And while the new breed of new technologist, his family and friends, required a growing army of retailers, bankers, nannies, real estate developers, doctors, hairdressers, tutors, decorators, governesses, entertainers, lawyers, gardeners and maids, they required them where they

where, in bright new garden cities in attractive countryside, not in Belfast, Rotterdam or even Portugal or Spain. And so, for those left out in the cold, there was decay, and a sullen and resigned despair: and even within the golden parallelogram, there was a permanent and aching sense of insecurity, an insecurity which grew out of the awareness that your livelihood depended not on the provision of a human need, but on the servicing of appetites that were defined in large part by the vicissitudes of taste and fashion. And thus it was, Jane said, that a technology that could have liberated humankind, that (for the first time) could have granted men and women the long-prayed-for means to plan their own societies (indeed, to plan how old technologies should give way to the new), had instead turned those very men and women into random particles, forever zipping round a constantly mutating universe, in search of nuclei that having welcomed them could just as simply cannon them away into the outer darkness once again. It flew, and she would say it with a bitter little smile, in the face of human nature.

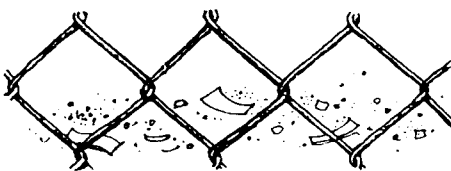
And that was indeed the problem. It was not so much that the new, thrusting Britain was a frosty place for the young, unskilled and unemployed, who unless rigidly controlled would take out their frustration on the general populace (though that, of course, was what the Kindred Volunteers were for). Nor was it, entirely, that a system based on the pursuit of individual gain raised expectations among the less thrusting and innovative classes that could not be fulfilled (which was why the Checkers had been so keen to pressurise the cable companies to keep advertisements for luxuries like VDUs and quadreos off all but the most exclusive channels). Nor even was it (absolutely) that, denied so much else, the masses had at least the right to feel part of a nation, with traditions and a heritage, which should be protected both from literal invasion by the dregs of the third world and from the constant sniping of self-styled 'progressive intellectuals' (which is why the Parents Unions' campaign to exclude all patriotic material from school curricula was such a popular initiative). No, it was above all that while individual and collective selfishness were excellent motivations for the strong and powerful (who set up businesses or ran the army), these instincts did appear to have a deleterious psychological effect on those whose temperaments were less mature (who broke shop windows and rioted at

football matches), which observation had eventually led the Government to the paradoxical but (if you thought about it) logical conclusion that the freer your economy became, the greater were the limits and controls that must be placed on individual actions in the social sphere.

Which was why (Jane would conclude) a Government that every five years claimed exclusive franchise on the freedom of the individual . . .

But there he stopped remembering the things she said, and indeed felt a kind of chill run through him, as he sat there in the bar, because today Jane was expected to report to the local branch headquarters of the DOF for what was described in the official letter as a 'routine assessment' of Jane's relief position. And as he had told her, begged her, pleaded with her: it might well be just that, so why on earth did she refuse to go?

Good heavens, Harold thought, as he saw a timecheck flash up on the VDU. It was 4.15 in Cape Town. Quickly, he drained his reising, and hurried back towards San Carlos Square. In such a rush was he, indeed, that he hardly noticed (though he would remember it, it would come back to him), the queues outside the meagre food shops, lines of people dressed in cashmere tracksuits or designer dungarees, people with even, milk-white teeth and fitted spectacles and solarified complexions, people (in short) who were as out of place here as he would have been at a Covent Garden juice-bar or in the grains department of a Sainsbury's.



He apologised profusely, but she didn't seem to hear. (She would be back at sixteen GMT, she'd said, and here it was, not five am in Anchorage). Surrounded by bags and boxes, hampers and rucksacks, stuffed with food (but not *her* food: there was white bread, tinned fruit, processed cheese), she drummed her fingers, stood, paced about, sat down again; until finally she asked him to assist her, she and Bryan were leaving now, their plans had changed, they needed to get all this to the lift, down to the garage, to await his imminent arrival. And of course Harold did as he was told, and they were standing in the garage, with the bags and sacks and boxes, when Bryan screeched in through the jaw-like doors, and the two of them humped all the food

into the boot, and were indeed about to go, when Madam turned to him, with an expression on her face which seemed to be half-way between embarrassment, and a kind of inappropriate contrition.

And she explained, that obviously, they'd decided to get out (out? out of where?), and he might wish to get out too (out of what? whatever for?), and he mustn't feel, that if he didn't want to stay, he should (why shouldn't he?) but perhaps he had the best idea, why should Merionethshire be any different (different from what?) and anyway. . .

And she slipped a banknote — worth more than his week's salary — into his hand, and they were gone.

And as he stepped into the lift, he realised that, after all, he knew.

It had been Jane, of course, who had explained it all. She'd been a 'peace campaigner', naturally (they all were, all that sort: it was an outrage, as the Great Aunt said, that they'd appropriated the word 'peace' when what they were really advocating was surrender). But unlike her friends, she'd never really thought that all those little proxy wars (she called them 'poxy wars') would really escalate; for her, it wasn't really about territory, or the principles of international law, or even national pride, or any of the reasons trotted out by the spokesmen of the DOS, but more a kind of circus, an entertainment to take people's minds off what was happening at home.

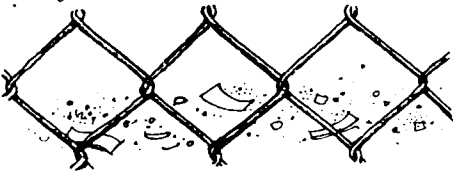
She'd argued it quite forcibly, in fact, and it had sounded plausible (it always did, of course, at the time). The liberation of 'Zimbabwe' in the early 90s (in response to the appeals of persecuted opposition groups within the country): had not that followed on the disturbances in Newcastle and Glasgow in August 1991? And the rescue mission to Belize in October 1987 (in collaboration with American and Guatemalan troops loyal to the Government-in-Exile of Air Marshal President Juan Martinez): had that not effectively cleared everybody's mind of the uprisings in Birmingham and Coventry the month before? And indeed, what about the 'Falklands' (now renamed 'New Bedfordshire') and the naval task force that had sailed just nine months after Brixton, Liverpool and Manchester had burned?

But she had admitted, always, that it could get out of hand, that one of these 'adventures' would prove to be unstoppable; and he knew, because he'd heard it talked of, seen it flashing on the VDUs, of the Sino-Soviet rapprochement, and the

Russian/Chinese mutual defence pact, and the growing tension as the Chinese government prepared to repossess Hong Kong at the ending of the British lease on June 30, 1997. . .

The lift had reached the 16th floor, and Harold hurried down the corridor. He must find out, now, what was going on. He fumbled for the keycard, slipped it in the lock, and the door slid open, just in time for him to hear the tail-end of a sentence, spoken by a voice he knew.

She'd switched their answering machine on, but in the rush, she'd obviously clocked the receiver on to 'monitor' (by this device, you could hear the voice of whoever it was who was calling, and then decide if you were 'in'). The voice was asking if this was the number of place where a steward of the name of Harold was presently engaged. And if this was so, could he please drop everything, at once, and come. The voice was Jane's.



Harold ran through streets that if he'd stopped to think, would have seemed strange: either empty, or filled with knots of people, arguing and shouting (or other knots standing silent and resigned), or groups of running men and women, their possessions clutched in plastic bags, their children pulled along behind. And finally he arrived at Jane's address, and the FPG was there already, dragging her across the pavement, from the front door to the wagon and he knew it was too late.

What was she saying? He could hardly hear the words. 'Why now?' — yes, that was it, she was screaming out: 'Why now?'

And as she was pushed into the wagon, her faced turned, and she saw him, standing on the corner, and she had just time enough to call:

'Harold, you know what's happening? Do you do know where they're taking me?' And she was crying, but laughing too, as if at something infinitely ludicrous, inappropriate and absurd:

'And can you believe it, Harold? That the bastards could be bothered to arrest me now?'

The streets were empty, for the little knots had melted, and the running families had reached — or not — their destinations. Harold stumbled over an old toy, left lying in the street. He bumped into someone's open door.

(The VDU was still on, in the front room. Three days ago, the British government had undertaken what was called an 'anticipatory defensive thrust' into mainland Chinese territory).

Why had no one noticed, when it had begun? The process which had brought Jane to the wagon and — no doubt — would now transfer her to a general utility? It had all been for the very best of motives. It was right that the police should demand the assistance of the populace (who after all, knew their own neighbourhoods). It was correct that education should bear its share of the responsibility for the violence and amorality that reached such epidemic proportions among them young. It was surely obvious that among all those millions of people on relief there were scroungers and deceivers (or, put plainly, cheats), and it was the right of the community to insist that the state's generosity (well, after all, the generosity of the taxpayer) was not abused. And it was clearly just that those who *wouldn't* work (as opposed to those who *couldn't*) should at the very least be obliged to undergo some form of training, to instill into them the basic disciplines they would require on their release.

The Neighbourhood Watch Groups came first (they were set up in the early 80s, on the recommendation of the then Chief Constable of London, after whom the DOS domestic complex — Newman House — was named). At about this time, too, the retraining centres (originally intended just for tramps and vagrants) extended their purview to wider groups of workshy, including those with homes and families. The Parent Power Groups were started in the wake of calls, for a reassertion of traditional British values in the schools (the name was a kind of in-joke, in the way that in the 60s the word 'revolution' had been used to advertise cosmetics, or the slogan 'power to the people' to promote electrical equipment) but soon they were retitled 'Parents Unions' (For a Responsible Curriculum, Against the Tide of Patriotism in Our Schools).

And the 'Checkers' had begun as unpaid auxiliaries to the Family Patrol Group, to assist those overstretched investigators of relief abuse (the slogan: 'Check Up On The Cheaters'); and the Kindred Volunteers, who grew out of the Neighbourhood Watch Groups, ran patrols throughout the cities in defence of our old people and the children against vandals, muggers, rapists, layabouts and anarchists.

(And Harold passed a hardware store, its wire mesh torn, where eight VDUs were

ghostly explaining how, as a diversionary tactic to assist their British allies, the USA had undertaken a 'retaliatory pre-emptive action' from bases in North Turkey, and had already taken Odessa and Donetsk).

And thus it had been that the Checkers, in collaboration with the General Parents Unions (for did these things not start off in the home), had finally combined with the National Kindred Volunteer Detachments (now combatting the distressing rise in pre-teen crime) to form the Kindred Groups of Britain, who had generously taken on the task of administering the growing network of retraining and re-education centres, now re-named the General Utilities for the Location of all Anti-social Groups, in one of which was Jane.

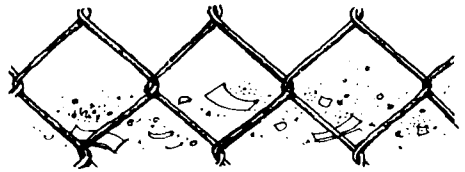
(And he passed the gaping window of a junk shop, in which appeared to be a kind of strange, brown, box-like object, which was obviously some form of visionless receiver, from which a voice emerged, which explained how, in response to the liberation of the South Ukraine, the forces of the Warsaw Pact — in a 'protectively offensive operation' — had taken Braunschweig and Hanover and were half-way to the Rhine).

But perhaps it had all been inevitable. And perhaps there had been no alternative. And Harold stopped in the middle of the empty square, and looked up to the sky, which was full of the most majestic white and grey and silver clouds, and he heard the rumble of what he supposed was thunder, and he saw the dazzling flashes of what must be lightning, and he told himself (and for the thousandth time) that once all this was over he would really get his life in order, he would start that little business, he would take advantage of his openings and seize his opportunities, and make something of himself at last.

He clicked his tongue. What *was* he thinking of? To stand here, day-dreaming, in the middle of the afternoon!

The sky was black, the skyline laced with fire. Harold set his shoulders, marched across the square, and pressed the buzzer on the entry-phone. He had responsibilities: he had a job to do.

All the rest was in the future.



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STATEMENT

by Yuri Andropov, General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, made on 24 November 1983

The leadership of the Soviet Union has already brought its evaluations of the militaristic course of the present American administration to the notice of Soviet people and other peoples, and warned the governments of the United States and of the Western countries coming out at one with it about the dangerous consequences of this course.

But Washington, Bonn, London and Rome did not heed the voice of reason — the deployment of American medium-range missiles is beginning on the territory of the FRG, Britain and Italy. Thereby the appearance of American 'Persings' and Cruise missiles in the European continent is becoming an accomplished fact.

Europe is living in conditions of peace for almost 40 years — longer than ever before in modern history. This has become possible owing to the consistently peace-loving policy of the countries of the socialist community, the efforts of the continent's peace-loving forces and also the realistic position of sober-minded politicians in the West. The approximate balance of military forces, including nuclear ones, between the states of the North Atlantic Alliance and the Warsaw Treaty states, that has formed in Europe, objectively served the cause of European security and stability.

Now the United States and NATO as a whole are taking steps directed at tipping the scales in their favour. The nuclear missiles that are being deployed near the borders of the Soviet Union and its allies are not intended for the defence of Western Europe at all — no one is threatening it. What will grow with the deployment of American missiles on European soil is not the security of Europe but the real danger that the United States will bring catastrophe upon the peoples of Europe.

During the two World Wars the flames of destruction spared the territory of the United States of America. Now, too, the people in Washington would like to think that by deploying their medium-range missiles in Europe and creating thereby an additional nuclear threat to the socialist countries they would be able to divert the return strike from their house. As to the security of the West European allies of the United States, it looks that it interests the American leaders only to the extent to which the West Europeans will be able by their lives, by their cities to lessen the retribution for the United States, should Washington give in to the temptation to unleash nuclear war in the illusory hope of winning it.

The deployment of the American nuclear missiles in Western Europe is by no means a step prompted by a reaction to some supposedly existing concern in the West about the present alignment of forces of the sides in Europe. Many times, using concrete figures, it was proved — and this is accepted by many politicians and specialists in the West — that at present a rough parity continues to exist in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty as regards medium-range nuclear weapons, while NATO has a considerable edge in terms of nuclear warheads. So if anybody has cause to be concerned it is the Warsaw Treaty countries which are being threatened by the military machines of the NATO states.

Neither can the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist community, when evaluating all this, turn a blind eye on the fact that Washington has also declared a 'crusade' against socialism as a social system and that those who have now issued the orders for the deployment

of new nuclear arms on the threshold of our house are basing their practical policy on this reckless premise. It appears that by deploying the Pershing-2s and Cruise missiles in Europe the governments of a number of NATO countries would want to create a concrete nuclear-missile foundation for this adventurist premise.

Can the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries ignore this danger? No, they cannot. That is why the highest party and state leaders of seven socialist countries declared at their meeting in Moscow on 28 June 1983 that under no circumstances will they permit a military superiority of the NATO bloc over the countries of the Warsaw Treaty.

When confirming their consent to the deployment of American missiles in their countries the governments of the FRG, Britain and Italy could not but know that it was from the outset that the United States did not want the attainment of a mutually acceptable accord on nuclear arms in Europe and did everything at the talks in Geneva and outside them to prevent such an accord. Likewise they could not but know that the Soviet Union and its allies would definitely take the necessary measures to safeguard their security, to prevent the United States and NATO as a whole from breaking the existing rough balance of forces in Europe.

It was also clearly stated by us that the appearance of new American missiles in Western Europe would make impossible a continuation of the talks that were being conducted in Geneva on nuclear arms in Europe.

The decisions adopted during the past few days by the governments of the FRG, Britain and Italy unequivocally show that contrary to the will of their own peoples, contrary to the interests of the security of their countries and contrary to the interests of European and universal peace these governments have given the green light to the deployment of the American missiles. Thereby they have assumed together with the government of the United States the entire responsibility for the consequences of the myopic policy about which the Soviet Union had warned in advance.

Having thoroughly weighed all the aspects of the obtaining situation the Soviet leadership adopted the following decisions:

First. Since by its actions the United States has torpedoed the possibility of reaching a mutually acceptable accord at the talks on questions of limiting nuclear arms in Europe and their continuation in these conditions would only serve as a cover for the actions of the United States and a number of other NATO countries directed at undermining European and international security, the Soviet Union considers its further participation in these talks impossible.

Second. Being cancelled are the Soviet Union's unilateral obligations which had for their purpose the creation of more favourable conditions for success at the talks. Thereby the moratorium on the deployment of Soviet medium-range nuclear weapons in the European part of the USSR is abrogated.

Third. On agreement with the governments of the GDR and Czechoslovakia the announced preparatory work to deploy on the territory of these countries operational-tactical missiles of increased range, that was started some time ago, will be accelerated.

Fourth. Since by deploying its missiles in Europe the United States increases the nuclear threat to the Soviet Union, the corresponding Soviet systems will be deployed with due ac-

count for this circumstance in ocean areas and in seas. By their characteristics these systems of ours will be adequate to the threat which is being created to us and our allies by the American missiles that are being deployed in Europe.

It goes without saying that other measures, too, will be taken to ensure the security of the USSR and the other countries of the socialist community.

As we commence the fulfilment of the decisions adopted by us we state that the reply measures from the Soviet side will be kept strictly within the limits that will be dictated by the actions of the NATO countries. The Soviet Union, and we stress this again, does not strive for military superiority, and we will do only what is absolutely necessary to prevent the military balance from being disrupted.

Should the United States and the other NATO countries display readiness to return to the situation that existed before the commencement of the deployment of the American medium-range missiles in Europe, the Soviet Union will also be prepared to do this. In that event our earlier proposals on questions of limiting and reducing nuclear arms in Europe would become valid again. In that case, that is on condition of the restoration of the former situation, the USSR's unilateral obligations in this field would also become effective again.

The Soviet Union declares with all firmness and in no uncertain terms that it remains an adherent of the principled course of ending the arms race, first of all the nuclear arms race, of lessening and ultimately totally removing the threat of nuclear war. It will further exert every effort for the attainment of these lofty aims.

The Soviet Union continues to come out for the most radical solution of the question of nuclear arms in Europe. It repeats its proposal to make Europe free of nuclear weapons altogether, both medium-range and tactical.

The Soviet leadership calls on the leaders of the United States and the West European countries to weigh once again all the consequences with which their own peoples and the whole of mankind are being threatened by the fulfilment of the plans to deploy the new American missiles in Europe.

As it is we are living in too brittle a world. That is why responsible statesmen must evaluate the developments and adopt a rational decision. It is human reason alone that can and must save mankind from the grave danger. We call on those who are pushing the world along the road of the ever more dangerous arms race to give up their unrealisable hopes of thus achieving military superiority in order to dictate their will to other peoples and states.

The Soviet Union is convinced that peace can be strengthened and the security of peoples guaranteed not by way of building up and inventing ever new types of armaments but, on the contrary, by way of reducing the existing armaments to immeasurably lower levels. Mankind has too many tasks which are not being solved only because colossal material, intellectual and other resources are being diverted. And from this viewpoint, too, the attainment of accords on a radical reduction of nuclear and other arms would be a boon for all peoples.

The Soviet leadership declares that in fulfilment of the Soviet people's will it will further do everything to ward off the danger of war and to preserve peace for the present and coming generations.



Novosti Press Agency



The term 'unemployment' conjures up the 30s. That's part of the problem. It isn't the same in the 80s. So old-style movements also won't work.

The Age of Unemployment

A roundtable discussion

The participants in the roundtable are: Sid Clay, TUC organiser for the Northern Region; Sue Cooper, unemployed in Birmingham and formerly a Sogat convenor; Tricia Davis, co-ordinator of the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre and Communist Party Executive Committee (CPEC) member; Steve Hart, shop floor activist at Ford and CPEC member; Roy Rix, Trade Union Liaison Worker at a centre for the unemployed, and previously a GMBATU convenor in Leeds. It is chaired by Philippa Langton, secretary of Equal Opportunities Committee, South East Region TUC and CPEC. All participate in their personal capacities.

Let me start with some general questions. Firstly, what do you see as the main characteristics of mass unemployment today? Are there particular conditions which are of special significance when we are talking about the campaign around unemployment? And finally, who are the unemployed?

Sid Clay The day I was made unemployed the bottom dropped out of my world. Being an activist in a factory, with my whole life structured and geared to the factory, and then suddenly, virtually overnight, to be divorced from all that, left me with a tremendous feeling of social isolation. That is one of the main effects of mass unemployment. Moreover, you are faced with trying to exist on an income less than half you have been used to. So obviously it's going to separate you from a lot of activities, and this is one of the big problems. The last question is an interesting one. Who are the unemployed? As activists in the movement, we tend to overlook the importance of this question: the unemployed, in my experience, are not about to join the barricades, they are people with all sorts of problems. Many of them suffer from intense apathy, there are those at the bottom of despair. The unemployed are a broad spectrum of people.

Tricia Davis It is important to ask who the unemployed are because we — that is, the activists — talk about the unemployed as though they were a large homogeneous group. But the reality is that it is *people* who are unemployed, people with very different backgrounds, different experiences of employment and, therefore, different experiences of unemployment. To take that diversity on board is an important pre-condition for beginning to understand what the problem is and what we can do about it.

Roy Rix The most characteristic feature seems to be the inevitability of unemployment. Moving around the community like I do, people all seem to have this fatalistic attitude; if they are

employed then unemployment is just round the corner for them, and if they are unemployed, they don't see any prospect of jobs in the foreseeable future. The other characteristic is that they are not attempting, in any way, shape or form, to relate it to government economic policy. They just see it as part of a world wide problem.

Steve Hart There is another area we need to look at — voluntary redundancies. We say this about unemployment, what's just been said, and it's true, but when voluntary redundancy appears in a lot of places, the takers are there. In my plant voluntary redundancy over the last few years has always been considerably over-subscribed, in spite of what the unions have said about having nothing to do with it. Now one of the reasons is obviously the large lump sum payments. But another is that where I work is a bloody awful place to work. In the past, in the mid 70s, there was anything between a 25% and 40% turnover rate of labour. Now it tends to be the case that you only take voluntary redundancy if you've got another job or something else worked out. About a third of the people that leave, in my experience, take the money planning to set up small businesses — double glazing, decorating, mini-cabbing, domestic appliance shops. But in other cases, people just don't want to work any more in that situation. When it comes to a choice between extremely high productivity work on the production line and not working, some prefer to risk the dole. But let me raise another problem. In a sense, the very word 'unemployed' is wrong. Because for a lot of people, especially the young, it is wrong to define them in terms of work. Unemployment is the negative of employment, but for many people there's not much of a link with employment. The prospect ahead, for the young and women, is often no work within sight. They don't define themselves in terms of that lack of a job. That is something that underlies the whole problem of movements against unemployment.

Sue Cooper As a women I've been unwaged at times and waged at other times and I prefer not to use the term unemployed because it doesn't relate to my social situation. I've spent many years rearing children when I didn't consider myself unemployed, though technically I was, but I couldn't sign on and get any money. In a sense what we are seeing now is men becoming unwaged with the women, and experiencing the same social segregation that women have experienced for a century, a reserve army of workers to be called on when they are needed and dismissed when they are not needed. I was a shop steward where I worked and very active. You go from one extreme to the other, from complete activity to total non-activity and you have half the money coming in. I feel the major symptom of unemployment today is that people don't

perceive of any change — most people think it will go on forever. They see an end to work as they know it — that is traditional manual work — they don't ever see it picking up. They believe that computers will come in and take over, and by the time they are ready to take up waged employment again they will be out of the running, especially youth. I agree with Steve that with youth it isn't a question of being unemployed, it's a question of non-work. The term 'unemployed' relates to another era. Most youngsters today don't relate to the word unemployed — it's the norm to them. They'll be without an income and so they think about how they can wheel and deal, the black economy.

Sid Roy said that there's a fatalistic attitude to unemployment and people are not relating it to government policies. This is a very important point. It's a question of the labour movement losing the battle of ideas, and the June election underlined this problem. Despite all the issues facing the unemployed, many of them still, in their wisdom, voted Conservative. That brings out one of the fundamental problems we are faced with as a movement. How do we go about winning the battle of ideas with people out of work, people on low incomes, people on pensions and so on?

Do you think there are contrasting attitudes between different parts of the country where the experiences of unemployment are divergent, for example between areas with a tradition of long-term unemployment and other parts of the country, the south east and the Midlands for example, where this is quite a new thing? Does that make a difference to people's attitudes towards unemployment?

Sue Part of my family comes from an area in the north where there is a tradition of long-term unemployment and, compared with the Midlands, there is a sense in which people do lose confidence in themselves, in their ability to work, and in their role within the family structure, which is still very rigid. In the Midlands, from my experience, there has always been some long-term unemployment, though on a much smaller scale. I feel that the Midlands' response much of the time is the black economy. They are finding their own alternative forms of income. Maybe that is because it is a big conurbation. They can get lost in it. They can do what they want in it and there is less chance of being found out so to speak. If they were a car mechanic at one time and the firm's gone bust, then they are taking on private jobs and undercutting the other car mechanics around.

Roy I want to take up the point Steve was making earlier on about people queueing up to get redundancy money. Let's take certain parts of the north of England, where the industry has been on short-time working not for a week or two but for months, and where they have been walked all over on the basis of rationalisation. Once you start putting people in that position, there is a certain weakening of resolve, the work becomes the last thing they would have opted for. I don't see it as surprising, therefore, that people in some basic industries are queueing up to take the money, especially given the amount. In mining and steel making, part payment of wages on top of redundancy payments between them represent quite a carrot to dangle in front of working class people. They have never had it as good. It is for many, whether we like it or not, a form of early retirement. Now we have argued for early retirement for years and we have argued for lump sum payments so that people can enjoy their retirement. The problem now is that it means selling jobs.

Tricia Women, when they lose their jobs, are moving very

quickly into the black economy, into charing, into childminding, even taking in people's washing which is a thing that I thought had gone out in the 30s. It has probably been happening for longer in the north of England, but it's now started to happen in the Midlands as well. Because women's employment has been much more precarious, women are much more willing to enter that sort of black or informal economy. I find it very interesting, by the way, that some of the most militant struggles to save jobs are those by women workers in the service industries where they have got jobs that they care about and they feel are useful to the community, like school dinner ladies and school secretaries, occupations which have never been at the forefront of trade union militancy previously.

Steve It seems to me, certainly in the south east, that what happens to the unemployed is that after a period of unemployment they cease to see themselves, or be seen, as unemployed. In east



Tricia Davis



Sid Clay

London one in every four or five sign on. They are in the unemployment figures, but in reality the people in Hackney don't witness massive unemployment, they just see a massive chunk of poverty. There is little to differentiate between a single parent who is not working, the next door neighbour in the lousy council flat who has never worked, or the person next door who worked until he was 24 and then took redundancy and has not worked in the last four years. This becomes a morass of poverty in the inner city. This is one reason you don't get an unemployed movement as such, because in the 30s much of the unemployed movement was around benefits, yet today the unemployed share this problem with many others. My experience is that it is very difficult to get a fight at Ford on the basis of individual redundancies, but it is possible around for example the import control issue which is a real campaign against unemployment. It is not narrow and sectional as outsiders might see it, but involves a vision of our industry, and defending the productive capacity of the motor industry, and therefore our jobs. That links in with campaigning against unemployment, because people aren't so much interested in campaigning *against* unemployment, what inspires them is campaigning *for* employment, for a decent society in which they'll do decent and useful jobs.

Sid I'd like to come back on one or two points because we shouldn't be too negative about the situation. There have been some tremendous struggles against unemployment, going back to

the UCS through disputes such as Lee Jeans, Timex and so on. These are just the ones that hit the headlines, but every day there is struggle going on and I don't think that we should be negative in the sense that we're saying that there isn't struggle going on.

The best mobilisers of feeling around unemployment in the recent period have been the 1981 and 1983 Peoples Marches. These were both around a very basic demand for jobs. How successful do you think they were — and why was the first more effective than the second?

Sue The first march was more successful than the second because there was a larger number of youngsters involved. They were mobilised for the first one demanding jobs. But they got YOP and YTS, and they didn't like it. And the impetus wore off because instead of jobs they got exploitation.

Sid The positive side of the marches was that they drew people



Steve Hart



Sue Cooper



Roy Rix



Philippa Langton

into activity and that is important in itself. It led to local organisation in places where possibly they haven't organised before — reception committees, public meetings, socials, centred around unemployment. It showed the face of the unemployed across the country. It's unfortunate that we didn't get the publicity we should have got, but that's the fault of the media not the march. But nevertheless they were compelled to show some of it because it was such a big event. It involved young people in campaigning which is important because, as Steve said earlier on, young people are a major part of the problem. So from that angle it was a very positive and useful event. As for the weaknesses, the first was the lukewarm support of the TUC as far as the second march was concerned. They rejected it at first and had to be dragged in by the scruff of the neck at the very end as a response to the mass pressure that built up. A further problem was the failure of the Labour Party to grasp the importance of the second march, because the general election was called during it and the Labour Party virtually opted out, at least this was the impression I got from my own area. They failed to understand its significance. It might not have been a socialist march, but it was certainly an anti-Thatcher march, and could have been exploited in the campaign for the general election. But the major weakness was surely the failure to develop any permanent structure after the march to ensure that there is an ongoing campaign. To me the whole impact of the march is wasted unless we set up a structure to campaign continuously in the locality on unemployment.

Tricia I agree with Sid that we ought to regard the marches as a success. It is easy, when you are involved in organising marches and so forth, to underestimate their value. A lot of people became involved in politics, not necessarily party politics admittedly, but politics, through the marches. And a lot of people involved in politics in turn learnt a great deal from people who weren't involved in politics. We, in the Midlands, worked with the churches, community groups and so forth. I agree with Sid on this organisational problem. In the Midlands we do have an organisation which we are quite proud of and which arose out of the first march, but the majority of us felt that the second march didn't contribute towards that. It drained us of a lot of energy and was very hard work at a time when the movement is generally demoralised.

Roy We must differentiate between 1981 and 1983. The 1981 march was the first real initiative that had been taken on

unemployment. It had become a forgotten word. It had been relegated to the fifth page and a couple of paragraphs on the unemployment figures. The other thing it did was to nail the myth about the scroungers and workshy. The press started to treat the issue of unemployment in a different context. That was a very significant development. The other question to consider is whether YOP was a direct result of it. It is possible. And, for all its bad features, at least it represents a recognition by the Government that it had to do something. It didn't do it in the manner that we wanted, but that was partly the movement's own fault because it did not want to get involved, it did not want to try and determine how YOP and work experience could be operated in the workplaces.

Now the 1981 march did lead to something. In Yorkshire it led to the trans-Pennine march. East Midlands had its march. Even the TUC took an initiative, the Jobs Express, which it wasn't prepared to do at the time of the 1981 march. The 1983 march took place in an entirely different climate. The movement was at a low ebb. It was really difficult to mobilise the sort of support that you got in 1981. Let's take a typical example of the difference. When we marched into Sheffield in 1981, 20 odd factories stopped work and there were literally 20,000 people on that march. Two years later we walked past those same factories and they were empty, the lads and lassies had gone. Hope and solidarity had given way to a sense of despair and resignation. A further problem in 1983 was that the Labour Party attempted to use it as an electoral platform, and in many instances we allowed

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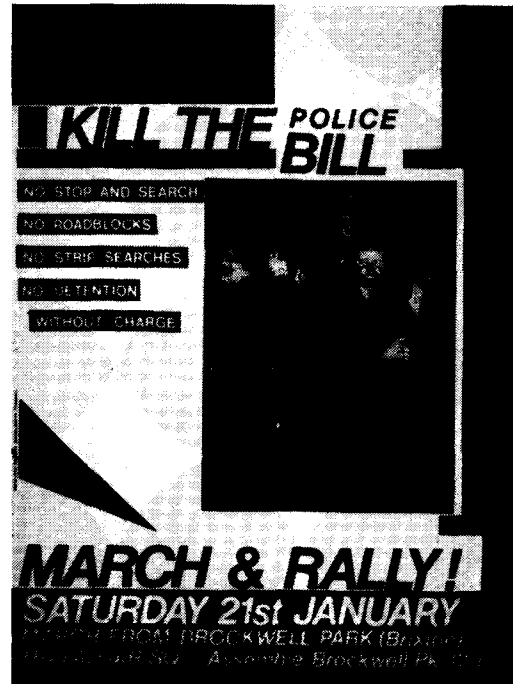
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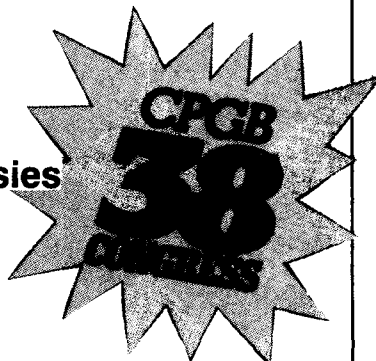
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them to do that. To a certain extent this took away from the breadth of expression. You went into towns and found the local Labour candidate as the main speaker. It was the Labour Party this, that and the other: it was a general election campaign and the argument was that a Labour government would solve all our problems. The political expression of the march got lost inside that electoral campaign. As a consequence, it certainly didn't have the same effect as that in 1981.

Steve 1981 for me was something that broke the cycle of industrial devastation, despair, demoralisation, and individualised response to unemployment. It said there was hope. It's as simple as that. That was the way it came across when you saw it on television. The people of Britain, with the Peoples March, were doing something about this issue that we were all very concerned about and it was the very simplicity of it that was capable of getting a terrific response. By treating it almost as a moral issue it transcended politics with a capital 'P' and became as a result the most intensely political activity imaginable. That was the greatest strength of it, that allowed it to reach parts that other politics don't reach. Precisely because it was new, because it was fresh, because it was the first step, it was able to do that.

A potential strength of the 1983 march was the involvement of the official movement on a much greater scale, but the movement was unable to grasp this newness, the refreshing breadth that was potentially there, and treated it like anything else. It's a truism that the official movement has not been able to tackle unemployment by its traditional methods. When, therefore, it treated the Peoples March in a rather traditional way, it just became another march, albeit a big and very important one, but nevertheless another march. The official movement, including my union, the TGWU, did a great deal, but somehow we weren't able to reach out in the way that 1981 did.

The Peoples Marches were, quite rightly, restricted to very specific demands but this nevertheless was a limitation. In this context, what kind of other initiatives should we be talking about? Let's start with the unemployed workers centres.

Roy There are all kinds of problems. It comes back to how the TUC sees its role in promoting initiatives on unemployment. They seem to have set up the centres very much as they did the 1983 Peoples March, with little idea of what they wanted to come out of it. As to funding, as I understand it, the TUC wanted affiliated unions to increase their members' dues by 2p a week to provide something like £12 million a year to make the centres financially stable, but the movement wasn't prepared to accept that sort of obligation. As a consequence they opted for MSC funding. Now one problem with MSC funding is the annual change in the centres' workers which means there is little continuity in the development of the centres. The other problem with MSC funding is the political constraints attached to it. Sid mentioned to me, before we started, a centre, for example, where trade union journals were classed as political and had to be taken out. In short, Tebbit and King are using the MSC to ensure that there are no real developments inside the centres. As a movement we've got to make our minds up as to what we want. There's not much point, in my opinion, in developing centres that don't positively reflect what the movement's all about. After all, if there is a fatalistic approach to unemployment and people don't see themselves, especially the young, getting jobs for years to come, where's the future of our movement going to come from, where are the new militants, the new leaders? We are always saying how important it is for our movement to be going

into action, to be mobilising people, to be supporting campaigns. Now you can't do that unless there is a continual progression of new ideas, new people coming into the movement, reflecting their experiences inside. And unless the centres have this sort of positive identification, not just on the basis of advice or social facilities but also campaigning, where is this link with the unemployed going to be made? But the TUC seems hostile to such an approach.

Sue I and a group of others were involved in the establishment of the claimants unions in the 70s. We chose the word 'union' because we saw ourselves as a group of people coming together to represent our own interests in the same way that trade unionists do. And although not officially recognised by the trade unions, they used to refer people to us all the time. Now until this discussion, I hadn't known about the MSC funding. But I've been wondering why the centres are so stagnant. That explains it. When you become unemployed, you are at the mercy of the state system, the benefit system, for your income and your livelihood, and you are always looking to see if someone is snooping, you are constantly at fear, you are under total repression. There's no other word for it. And the most political pinnacle of this system is the supplementary benefits system with everything that goes with it. Now it can be very mobilising, if you can get together and learn about your own experiences in fighting that system. But it is a fight, a real fight. It's just as much a fight as it is in a factory, getting yourself recognised or whatever. It's harder in fact. But how can you get that approach and fight if you are funded by the MSC?

Tricia Sue has raised quite an important point: it is not a question of giving or not giving welfare rights advice, it's how you do it. And that's one of the major constraints created by MSC funding of unemployed centres. I don't object to people being given welfare advice, but it's a question of enabling people to see the politics within welfare rights and enabling them to organise themselves. This question of the unemployed workers centres takes us right back to the beginning of the discussion, to who the unemployed workers actually are, who identifies themselves as unemployed? The only people who see themselves as unemployed workers in my experience are white men who have been active in the trade union movement. Now those people are important but they are not the only people who are unemployed. Women don't identify themselves as unemployed workers. The majority of black people don't identify themselves as unemployed workers. In my experience, we are not getting across to those people in the centres. To do this we've got to look at things like welfare rights, and how to develop them in a political way, and other services. One of the areas in which the women's movement has been most successful, in which it has managed to hold on, are those areas where it is giving a service, in pregnancy testing, women's aid refuges, childcare etc. That kind of politics was seen by a lot of people on the Left, in the 70s, as not real politics, it was seen as the ambulance service of capitalism. But in actual fact those kinds of activities drew a lot of women into the political arena. A lot of working class women came into the women's movement through such initiatives. They politicised them because they saw it was possible to take control of your own life, even in minor ways, to wrest a bit of power from the system.

Sid We've got to see the centres as they really are, and not expect too much from them. One of the major problems amongst the unemployed is apathy. And the centres have a function if for no other reason than to provide a focus for unemployed people, somewhere to go. It is not true too that the centres as a whole are not doing

anything or attracting people. I know a centre in my area in which 500 unemployed people attend every week on a regular basis. It's got weaknesses, but it carries out a whole range of workshop activity. It purpose designs things for the community. I had the privilege, only the other day, of presenting on their behalf a trolley with a walking frame attached to a child who had spina bifida. They had designed and made it in the centre. All right, this is not going to solve the problem of the unemployed, but it is building important links with the community. And the centre is providing unemployed people with the things that they themselves want and are asking for.

One other point. We refer to the TUC as if it is some remote body out there. But we are the TUC and the weaknesses of the TUC are a reflection of the weaknesses of our movement. On every centre management committee there are three representatives of the TUC: they might come from the local trades council, but they are there as endorsed representatives of the TUC and should in some way be reflecting TUC policy within that management committee. Now I agree completely with Roy on what we would like. What I've spoken about is what we've got, and what we've got to be content with at this time. What we'd like is centres in which we could do much more. We need to do much more. But let's not look at the labour movement through rose-tinted glasses. I've sent out thousands of collecting forms for donations. I didn't get a single reply from the movement. We've got deep problems in the movement. When we talk about the centres we need, then we've got a lot of education to do within the movement to achieve that.

One of the differences with the 30s is the greater involvement of the trade union movement. But there are obviously serious limitations. What role can the trade union movement play on unemployment?

Steve A very basic role of the trade union movement is in relation to the alternative strategy. We have to win people away from the idea that the only future for jobs in Britain is, as Thatcher suggests, working in Macdonalds or at funfairs in Corby. We must project a different vision, the concept that we can win people behind fighting for a strategy that means jobs, that takes into account new technology, in a rather wider way, I would suggest, than we often think about it. Until we start talking about that kind of alternative strategy, then we are not going to get very far, people will accept the dead end of Thatcherism. The trade union movement must step up its work on this. A lot has been done, but mainly in committees and far too little at the shop floor level, where it gets a very good response when you open up the debate.

Tricia Can I add some practical things? Firstly, the trade union movement can offer its resources to unemployed people. In the Midlands, a very important part of our strategy has been to use trade union offices, telephones and cars, if of course we're allowed to. Secondly, the unions could organise their own unemployed rather better than they do. This means organising them not simply as individuals, but recognising that unemployed people, whilst they retain individual union membership, need some sort of representation within that union. Perhaps unions should consider having unemployed representatives on their committees, because it's very hard to be an individual constantly raising your own particular problem. Thirdly, they can offer their credibility. The unions retain, whatever their problems, the loyalty of vast numbers of working class people, and that is very important for any campaign around unemployment. Finally, what the unemployed lack is not ideas, but a cultural forum within which they can come together. This requires some appreciation of cultural politics by the unions.

It also requires greater recognition and respect for forms of organisation which are different from their own.

We would all probably agree that an unemployed workers movement along the lines of the 30s is inappropriate today. But is there a place for some form of unemployed movement today?

Sid The unemployed workers movement in the 30s played a tremendous role but it was isolated from the main labour movement. My main reservation about an unemployed workers movement is that it would tend to alienate the unemployed from the broad movement. Rather, what I would like to see is the development of a structure through the trade unions for the unemployed to have their voice. We don't have that now. I'm a member of the TGWU and I don't even have a branch to go to.

Steve I don't think the argument that an unemployed workers movement would be divisive and split the unemployed from the trade union movement is the problem. Our experience of autonomous movements is that if they have got the right kind of approach both they themselves and the wider movement will take up the issues in a much better way. The problem, however, is that we can't wish an autonomous unemployed workers movement into being. I would love there to be one, but when we are talking about the nature of unemployment and how people perceive their unemployment, I think we are getting close to the problem of why there isn't one. Something that effects four million people in such a deep way hasn't failed to develop simply because of lack of leadership somewhere or other, it's because of something fundamental to the nature of unemployment.

Tricia I agree with Steve about that. When we talk about autonomous movements, we are thinking of models like the women's movement and ethnic movements, but these come out of a celebration as well as an oppression. There isn't very much to celebrate about the condition of being unemployed. That makes it a fundamentally different kind of proposition. There are also difficulties in the sense that the idea of a national unemployed workers movement draws on traditions of the 30s, but conditions aren't the same now, we don't have the dole queues in the same kind of way. You've got a two-weekly signing-on system. The unemployed don't see each other in the same way. At this stage, we haven't got either the political or organisational framework to understand how those different experiences can be welded together. We've got to look to local initiatives to see if, within those, we can help unemployed people to find the space to start organising.

Roy We have got to stop talking about organising the unemployed. That's patronising. The unemployed themselves are quite capable of deciding what they want. Now I am loath to envisage an unemployed movement. To categorise the unemployed as being something separate from other sections of society is wrong, we want to see them as an integral part of society, using the resources we've got so they can take initiatives at a local level in their communities. The 30s movement was very much on the basis of means-tested benefits. Who is to say that this is not Thatcher's strategy; after all social security and supplementary benefits merge next year. There's going to be a whole series of new regulations that will restrict the ability of unemployed persons to claim benefits they are entitled to. This may lead to developments amongst the unemployed. But a key factor in this will be the willingness of the labour movement to respond in a positive manner rather than the negative stance we tend to adopt now towards something we don't control. □



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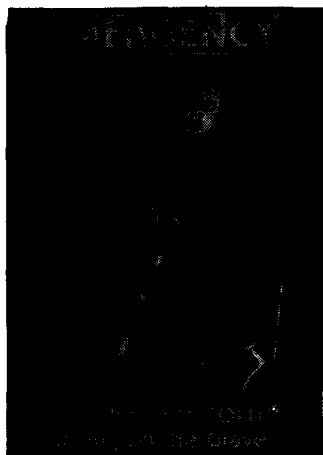
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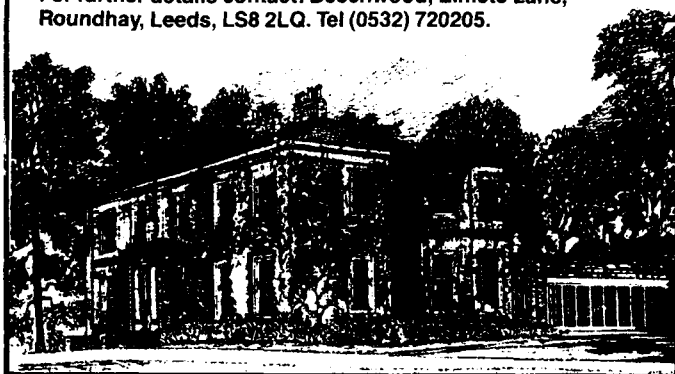
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Interview with **MELVYN BRAGG**

Michelene Wandor

Melvyn Bragg is the editor and presenter of London Weekend Television's *South Bank Show* which, this season, includes appraisals of such varied cultural figures as Alberto Moravia, Catherine Cookson, Alan Bleasdale and Paul McCartney. Bragg is also a prolific novelist. Here he talks to Michelene Wandor.

Do you find it easy to combine working in television with writing novels?

Well, I do use an awful lot of my energies, commitments and skills here on the *South Bank Show*. I have to think fast, engage in internal and external politics, take real risks. On the other hand, I can feel after a few hours of writing something that this is the best time I've spent in the last two days. What worries me about the relationship between the two is that having a job that's quite hectic in television — that's a way to batten down other things that might have festered or yeasted or leavened in your mind. There isn't time in this job for that personal pace and slow pursuit of the things that you are thinking about that you get when you have more solitude. I don't know how to solve that. I'm a bit embarrassed to talk personally — but any writer sooner or later needs time not just time to write, but the sort of time where you can actually digest what's happening, work things out.

Do you write poetry?

Yes, but for the waste paper basket, that sort of poetry.

Can we move on to the relationship between art and politics. You were chairman of the Literature Panel of the Arts Council for three years. What do you think were the most important things you did there?

A range of things: helping to put up the money for writers' bursaries, helping to set up more schemes for writers in residence, maintaining the schemes of sending writers out on tour to speak and read. I was aware that there were one or two big problems looming, particularly around community arts. There were quite a few requests

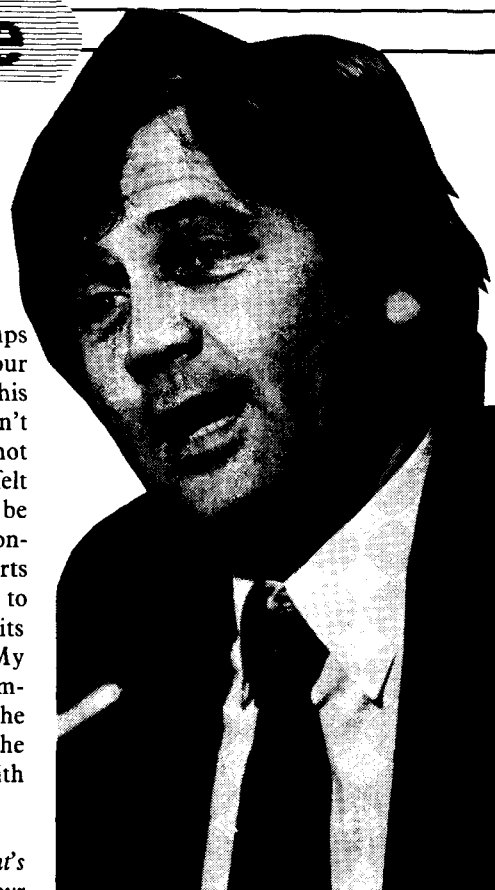
coming in from community arts groups who were producing magazines, and our guys would look at them and say that this writing isn't worth supporting, it isn't published first novel standard so we're not going to give it a grant. A lot of people felt that there was a very serious line to be drawn between professional and non-professional bodies, and that the Arts Council only existed to give money to professional people in the arts and it had its work cut out to do that properly. My personal sympathies were with the community arts groups, but there was not the slightest chance that the Panel or the Council itself would really go along with that.

What do you think about the Government's latest proposal to grant-aid the big four national theatre and opera companies directly, instead of handing all arts subsidy to the Arts Council?

That's disaster. I mean, not as big a disaster as dismantling the metropolitan boroughs: if that happens, it's going to be disastrous for the arts. But the hiving off of these big companies would be very wounding indeed. The big companies such as the National Theatre, and the Royal Opera House would then be directly government controlled, and that would be very dangerous. Whatever you think of the Arts Council, it is still a distancing body, and has some independence from direct government control. If this changed, then it would totally weaken the Arts Council, because it's the big companies that give it its strength; those companies, the big four, would get on famously and the rest would wither away as fast as anything.

What do you think needs to be done?

I advocate closing down the National Theatre or the RSC tomorrow. Literally. I think Peter Hall or Trevor Nunn should shut down one of those big places to show that the arts can't continue to manage hand to mouth. They wouldn't like that, Mrs Thatcher wouldn't like it to be made known in public that they can't even run a National Theatre, it would expose the



minginess of our grants. If they've got any guts, that's what they should do. I think the unions should join in. I really am serious; you might think it's a bit of a wild idea, but it's not that wild. They should do it when a head of state is arriving; she can't bear that — she doesn't want to be humiliated.

How do you feel about the cuts that have already been made to arts subsidy?

They're whittling away at the work that's gone on to build up the arts over the last 20 years; it isn't as if we've got enough repertory theatres or cinemas, or arts centres, but what there is now considered a superabundance that can be chiselled away. In the 60s and 70s, with real need and a leap in Arts Council money, certain advances were made. That will all go.

In an ideal world, how would you like to see the arts subsidised?

Well, starting from the Arts Council's own figures, the structures they support need to be kept intact — that's 1200 clients, who will need about £120-130 million next year. I think they should then embark on a sort of capital investment policy — and this is just cloud-cuckoo land in figures — of, say 50 or 100 million to build more theatres, arts centres, etc. It's all there, waiting to be done. The last 20 years have shown that any

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investment in the arts has been rewarded very handsomely. You've given people jobs, you've got your money back in direct and indirect ways, you've given lustre to a lot of very lack-lustre inner city areas.

Do you think this hostility to the arts is a conscious part of current policies?

No. I think they're philistine to the bone. At some unconscious level they might associate community arts, theatre, the young British cinema as somehow left and therefore dangerous, but I think it's really much simpler than that, I really do. I think there's a sense that somehow the RSC and the National and the Opera are a *Good Thing*, and we have our great actors and we have Shakespeare, so just give them the money to struggle on. I don't think this applies to every individual in the Conservative Party — it doesn't apply to the new Arts Minister, Lord Gowrie, — but I don't know what his strength is going to be.

You've been involved with an organisation called 'Arts for Labour'. Can you say something about that?

Well, it came about when I was shoved on a platform to explain the Labour policies on the arts to the press, during the last election. I haven't yet been particularly active in that campaign as such. But I've always been active in the Labour Party. I've been a card-carrying member for as long as I can remember. My father comes out of that generation in West Cumberland, where there were only Tories and Liberals, and you voted Liberal, believe it or not. The Labour Party in Wigton, where I grew up, started just after the Second World War; the early meetings were in our pub kitchen. I think Arts for Labour is probably a good thing as a support unit for a particular

occasion, such as a general election. I don't really know how a group of solitaires and variously busy people engaging in disparate areas of the arts could be very effective, except for once in a while.

Would it be better if it had some kind of structured, organisational link with the Labour Party?

I joined the Fabian Society a few months ago — and it's trying to rejuvenate itself in order to do just that. Within something like the Fabian Society people can discuss a range of subjects, from economics to the arts, because one's got to have very direct access to the slots — slots being seats in Parliament and on councils.

What in particular do you feel you can contribute to the Fabian Society?

I joined because Philip Whitehead, who's a friend of mine and who was an MP till the last election, outlined what they intend to do over the next two or three years, and they're trying to do something positive about the arts and television, which I know something about.

Is this connected with your criticisms of cable television?

Whatever you think about public service television, nevertheless it has a lot to offer the general public. Cable television is going to undercut that without any question, and it seems to me that for the Labour Party not to have a policy to prevent this happening is ludicrous. Badly as they might feel they are treated on television, they are given a straight staircase to decency, compared to the broken ladder that the press offers them. They should fight to preserve the public service aspect of

television. I think cable's being rushed in for spurious reasons.

In what ways will cable undercut public service broadcasting?

If cable television comes in — if London cables up, or even half cables up, and if they're allowed to take advertising and compete with ITV for advertising — then the quality of the programmes is going to suffer. The only thing that cable stations will be able to afford to do is put on American pap, that's a fact, nothing else is as cheap, there's nothing else you can buy for a thousand pounds an hour — except American TV serials in their fourth or fifth run. You'll get two or more million people watching, and as soon as there's that sort of audience, the advertisers can force our prices down (ITV, that is) and that breaking of the monopoly and erosion of the audience will affect public service broadcasting. Programmes like the *South Bank Show*, *Weekend World*, *Horizon* whatever you think of them, are watched by a large number of people from all sorts of backgrounds, and the appreciation index is very high indeed for them.

What could the Labour Party do to protect public service broadcasting?

They could do it very simply. At the committee stage they could decide that the BBC should have the monopoly of the licence fee, that ITV shall have the monopoly on advertising, and that cable should have the monopoly of subscription, so that you pay for your cable service. That would retain ITV's power base, which is its money. The paradox is that ITV can only put out public service broadcasting because it's rich. If ITV wasn't rich, then it wouldn't be worth controlling; in fact it has

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the IBA controlling it very much more than you might think; it makes ITV do programmes which lose it money — things like *The London Programme*, *Black on Black*, arts programmes, and it can do that because ITV is rich. If cable created a competition for advertising, then ITV would become poorer, and then the IBA couldn't stand in the way of letting a poorer system fight its way out of trouble, and if ITV went down-market, the BBC would also go down-market.

What about the argument that cable television will create opportunities for the community to make its own programmes?

Well, I do think that there is an interesting argument there. Not all the arguments are on my side. I can see the community arts thing in terms of publication on the screen, but whether they should have more space on network television is another matter. You've got to be quite careful about access to network slots. Oddly enough I think the far Left and the Right are joined about cable television, they both say whoopee, let's get our hands on it all. In a way the far Left is right to welcome cable, because it

could give resources to people to make their own local programmes. In an ideal world cable would deliver that. I don't think the cable world is going to be ideal. It will be brutal and they won't have a hope in hell. I get back to the old Labour Party argument, where what you've got is not so much a consensus, but solid achievements, and you have to understand that these have been arrived at through things like monopolies and licence fees, and if you chop these, the solid achievements will go and are you sure you can replace them?

Do you hold a Reithian view of the importance of public service broadcasting?

Yes, I do. I absolutely believe it totally or I'd get out tomorrow. The whole glory of radio and television is that it cuts through so many barriers, geographical, financial, psychological and educational. You're in your own room, you've never been to an opera, you can't afford it, you're embarrassed to go, you don't know anything about it, and you can get it all by turning on and giving it a go. With the *South Bank Show*, for example, a very small percentage of our audience are loyal *South Bank Show*

viewers. Another slightly bigger audience likes to watch specialist films about painters or film-makers — they come and go. But the biggest section is people whose evening's entertainment and information is watching television. I'm making a programme about Peter Brook's production of *Carmen*, and I want that to be a) true to Peter Brook's intention, b) make people who know something about opera really think, and c) reach out to people who know very little. I totally believe that. I can't see any other point in working in this medium otherwise.

You've just had another novel published — Love and Glory; do you think you might leave television to concentrate on writing?

I'd never leave television entirely because I like it too much. In that seven years when I had a fairly solitary life, I found I just became too depressed. There is no doubt that in a few years' time I'll pull out to a greater or lesser extent, but I'd never leave broadcasting; I like working with people and this is the job that I know how to do.

© Michelene Wandor

THE GENIUS OF VENICE

Tony del Renzio

The exhibition now at the Royal Academy is remarkable for the amazing works brought together for the first time, thus allowing a view of what is generally meant when anyone speaks of sixteenth century Venetian art. It is marvellously rewarding to see, many for the first time in this country, paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture, so accessibly displayed. Though there are difficulties in defining exactly what is meant by 16th century Venetian art, a certain quality does dominate, and might be seen to arise from technical developments that aptly fit the artists' preoccupations. Despite the inclusion of a short essay on architecture in the catalogue, some forty pieces of sculpture though mostly on a small scale, and an array of drawings and prints some of which are on a surprisingly large scale, 'The Genius of Venice' celebrates painting in oil on canvas, pre-eminent in Venice, establishing a

dominant aesthetic of brushwork and surface texture.

The point is frequently made in the catalogue that the opposition of *colorito*, 'colouring', to *disegno*, 'drawing', as the basis of Venetian practice in painting, is not to be interpreted in the modern sense of being colourists rather than draughtsmen, nor as surrendering to the delights of colour at the expense of structure. They aimed to produce works out of the qualities available to them with the brush. They did not conceive their works as coloured drawings in the way the Florentines did. The use of canvas, less resistant to the pressure of the brush than wooden panels, aided this. The same qualities, however, do appear in the murals which, by their nature of course, are absent from this show.

It has been pointed out that the way the Venetians began to paint with the intro-

duction of oil colours might well have been influenced by the mosaics they had before them. Already several centuries old, their surfaces were less regular and took the light in fascinating ways, as do those that remain to this day. This attention to mosaics is further testified by a minor revival of the art in the early 16th century. Moreover, these were portable and on a small scale, like so many of the earlier oil paintings.

Nevertheless, there is something in these works more readily appreciated in our time, something akin to a major side of nineteenth and twentieth century art, to Turner who learned much from the Venetians and from the Lagoons themselves on his visits, to the Impressionists, to the Fauves, to Picasso even in his most austere Cubist phase; something exaggerated and distorted in the Expressionist flight from intellect, and forced to carry too great a load by the American artists of the 50s. It is the sensuous nature of paint applied to a surface to capture light, but alone insufficient.

It would not be entirely fanciful to think that the quality of their environment fed these painters their appreciation of colour

and texture. The work of the elements upon stone and wood and plaster as well as the changing patterns of sky, water and sand, typical of the Lagoons, the 'Seven Seas' of the ancients, presented them with almost unlimited examples of colour at work, colour with indexical functions, colour determined by the processes of nature. As John Steer points out, Florentine painting is brighter and more polychrome. He refers to the importance for the artists of central Italy of what, in a telling afterthought, he defines as 'colours'. For the Venetians, the word remains obstinately singular.

If there is little documentation of any coherent theory of colour, one can be constructed from the works themselves, and from the commentaries of the period. Even though the trade of the Republic made a greater range of pigments more readily available, this, paradoxical as it may seem, made the artists more conscious and more prudent in their use of colour. Working much more directly and able to correct a work more easily during the painting, Venetian artists built their pictures from blocks of colour freely brushed upon the surface. This tended still further to a more restricted range of hues for each picture. It is this aspect of Venetian practice that is indicated by the term *colorito*.

Much of the exhibition is dominated by Giorgione and it is rather a pity that not one of the half dozen or so works nowadays accepted as by his hand was able to be included. Familiar though they may be to the specialist, the presence of one or two of them would have made the logic of the show's argument easier to perceive. 'Giorgionismo' uses this concern with colour and texture, with *facture*, above all, to deal with what, at one end of the range, might be called allegory and myth, and, at the other, is termed, in Italian, *poesie*, the 'poetical'. The preoccupations are not distinct in practice and continued throughout the rest of the century. Some of the later artists were to influence the greatest European artists of the seventeenth century.

The two paintings, now not normally seen together, by Veronese, *Venus and Adonis* from the Prado, and *Cephalus and Procris* from Strasbourg, both acquired by Velazquez in the 1650s for the Spanish Royal Collection, repay careful attention. They depict mythological situations, commonplaces of Venetian culture from the editions of Ovid, among the first printed

books in Venice. Such subjects fitted the developments that followed the acquisition of the mainland territories, the adoption by the nobles and the wealthier citizens of country pursuits more typical of the landed gentry of mainland Italy. The Venetians had, of course, from the earliest times, gone wildfowling in the Lagoons, the resort of migratory birds winter and summer alike. Indeed, throughout the century, hunting dogs are thrust into prominence in paintings as diverse as Tintoretto's *Washing of the Feet*, Moroni's *Gian Lodovico Madruzzo*, Bassano's *Rest on the Flight to Egypt*, not to mention this same artist's remarkable portrait of two dogs, and, of course, Titian's famous *Boy with Dogs*. It is obvious why, a couple of centuries later when the Venetians had virtually reinvented gentle manners with the introduction of the table fork and the handkerchief, the new English landed gentry should seek to copy the Venetian style and even build their country houses in a Palladian mode.

What the Giorgionesque paintings show is a particular interlocking of painterly sensibility with the intellectual interests of

sixteenth century Venice, and to miss this is to misunderstand them as the *Guardian* reviewer did, reducing them to the splash, spatter and gob type of painting he champions. What the paintings depict and what they mean are not the same thing, nor are they simple and straightforward. They are demanding, but it is so much easier to surrender to their surface charms and bravura.

The intellectual ferment of the Renaissance was no less in Venice than Florence. It was in Venice the Aldine editions originated and those who are perplexed by the mysteries of Giorgione might well turn to the alchemical symbols of that 'archaeological' romance, *Polifilo*. Aldus Manutius' book publishing has been described as a prototype of early capitalist enterprise. What it helps to underline is the importance of Venice rather than Florence in the Northern Renaissance. Erasmus is particularly significant in this respect. More was accomplished, through the printed book, in the quarter century from 1494 in Venice than in the previous hundred years in Florence. The paintings could not fail to show it.



"Venus and Adonis" by Veronese

THE UNHIPNESS OF FOLK

Karl Dallas

Why is it so unhip to like folk music? I'm not speaking of the commercial music industry, which has to break as well as make crazes, turn yesterday's heroes into tomorrow's also-rans, the applied logic of Detroit marketing. I'm thinking of otherwise intelligent people, who would not sacrifice a principle like Clause 4 of the Labour Party Constitution or the rights of trade unions to manage their own affairs merely because they had become unfashionable.

There has never been a greater hunger for songs, as the October 22 CND demo showed, and folk music is still the most approachable form for most activists. Yet many young musicians, like Ali and Robin Campbell of UB40 (sons of folksinger Ian Campbell) and Chris Foreman of Madness (son of John Foreman, the Broadsheet King), find the indigenous black culture of reggae more congenial than the songs their parents sang.

It is interesting that one of the most powerful songs on Steve Ashley's *More Demo Tapes* cassettes, *We Say No*, is performed with a reggae beat. Ashley is a thoughtful singer-songwriter whose past songs, like the lovely *Fire and Wine*, have indicated a feeling for tradition and the English countryside, and it is significant that he has felt that he has had to turn away from the clubs of the folksong revival back to the peace movement that gave them birth to find an audience for his newer, more politically-committed songs.

Musically, this is a stronger collection than 'Demo Tapes' to which it is a sequel, though the quality of the lyrics is more variable, ranging from the unfunny Johnny Cash parody, *Which War Son?* to the stirring *Easy Come* whose chorus line 'we are easy come but we are not easy go' reminded me of Pete Seeger's famous dictum, 'take it easy — but take it'. Seeger's populism was the fertile soil from which much that was good in the heyday of British folk grew, and Seeger's reunion with his old associates in The Weavers, still has the old spirit on the album of their 1980 Carnegie Hall meeting, *Together Again*, but far from being a sterile exercise in geriatric nostalgia (like, for instance, Paul Simon's recent concerts), one has the sense of a continuing tradition, especially when the superb Ronnie Gilbert sings Holly Near's moving *'Hay Una Mujer'*,

about a woman who has 'disappeared' in fascist Chile, followed closely by a fiery rendition of the old International Brigade song from the Spanish War, *Venga Jaleo*. Holly Near sings the song herself, incidentally, on a fine duet album with Ronnie Gilbert, 'Lifeline.'

It's ironic that the populist strain carried into Britain by pioneers like MacColl is represented today almost solely by the Spinners, who this year celebrate their 25th anniversary with a double album *In Our Liverpool Home*, recorded at a concert for the unemployed. If folk is unfashionable, then the Spinners are doubly so, which is unjust not because they are not sometimes excessively cosy and undemanding of their audiences, which they are, but because I suspect what is held mainly against them is their expertise in manipulating the mass media, and in particular television. It is a pity, however, that they are not able to find more truly contemporary material than John Lennon's *Imagine* or Hughie Jones' *Stockholm Tar*.

Essentially, I see little difference between such living in the past and the musical attitudes revealed by Martin Carthy's new band, Brass Monkey, a potentially interesting collaboration between a group of our finest instrumentalists: Carthy himself, squeezebox-player John Kirkpatrick, and three 'horn players' (as jazzmen would term them), Howard Evans on trumpet/flugelhorn, Martin Brinsford on saxophone/mouth-organ and Roger Williams on trombone. What it sounds like, however, is deliberate archaism, and though some of the performances are enjoyable, Carthy's singing is particularly dispirited, apart from on the

reworking of *The Maid and the Palmer*.

Interestingly, it is Leon Rosselson who has produced one of the most musically stimulating albums in his latest for Fuse, 'Temporary Loss of Vision' and Evans and Carthy play on parts of it. Rosselson's reputation for incisive, carefully crafted lyrics was even acknowledged by Tony Palmer in 'All You Need Is Love', and though he is a fine musician, he has often tended to let the words speak for themselves, almost baldly. Here, there is more reliance on what he himself criticised as 'sounds' in the sixties (the string synthesizer on *My Daughter, My Son*, for instance, and the fade in and out of the voice on *Sun*) but as a blend of musical form and lyrical content it would be hard to better — though some of his recent work runs it very close.

Steve Ashley: 'More Demo Tapes' (£2.30 from PO Box 101, Cheltenham, Glos, GL52 6ET)

Brass Monkey: 'Brass Monkey' (Topic 12TS431, £4.50 from Topic Records, 50 Stroud Green Road, London N4)

Holly Near & Ronnie Gilbert: 'Lifeline' (Redwood RR404, £5.59 from Collets Folk Shop, Charing Cross Road, London WC2)

Leon Rosselson: 'Temporary Loss of Vision' (Fuse CF384, £4.50 from 28 Park Chase, Wembley Park, Middlesex)

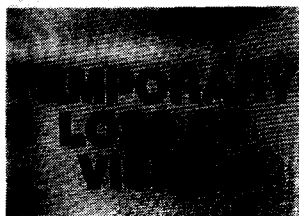
Spinners: 'In Our Liverpool Home' (PRT SPN1, £5.99 plus postage from 24 Beresford Road, Wallasey, Merseyside)

Weavers: 'Together Again' (Loom 10681, £6.50 from Collets Folk Shop, Charing Cross Road, London WC2)

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Carry Greenham Home

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Carry Greenham Home was filmed over seven months with the support of the Greenham women. It covers the best known actions: the big blockades, the 'embrace the base' action, the dancing on the silos, the Easter actions and an eviction of the camp by Newbury Council. It also covers some of the more private actions that are part of the continuing protest around the base as well as showing the daily life of the camp and the difficulties of seeking and establishing new values and ways of living. It exposes the media's relationship to a provocative subject.

Carry Greenham Home is not so much about the 'pros and cons' of cruise missiles, it is about the power and strength of opposition, the implications of non-violent protest and of living non-hierarchically in an all women's community. It shows women coming to Greenham with a single purpose and carrying home a broader and more far-reaching view of the struggle for peace.

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Georgi Arbatov

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The arrival of the first Cruise missiles and the breakdown of the INF talks have intensified discussion of the way forward for the peace movement. Whilst the immediate challenge is to make the new weapons inoperable, the discussion has revealed a widespread desire to understand *what* is going on, *why* there is an arms race and *how* it can be ended. Three recent books provide useful background material and arguments.

The most readable, by far, is Jonathan Steele's review of recent Soviet foreign policy and, without doubt, this is the first to recommend to a relatively apolitical newcomer to the issues. Steele is by no means sympathetic to the politics and ideology of the Soviet government and this makes his demolition of the most important myths about Soviet policies all the more convincing — although, at times, a little embarrassing to a committed Soviet supporter!

Steele is an accomplished journalist and uses precise facts and pithy arguments in clear and jargon-free language. Whilst, on occasions, he may oversimplify and overstate his case, notably in dismissing some Soviet success stories (in the Third World, in weapons' development, etc), even these passages provide a useful counterweight to the myths that are generally believed today.

For a newcomer, the clarity of the explanations, more than four hundred source references and the sixteen pages of index entries will be particularly useful for further and more detailed study. But, whilst the book is one of the best ever with respect to 'what' is going on, it does little to explain the 'why' of international conflict.

Next in readability comes Fred Halliday's polemical analysis of the many and intertwining factors that led to the collapse



of detente — definitely a 'why' book though not short on 'what'. Although it is not a difficult read, it does use political jargon which may be unfamiliar to some readers and it does presume, at the very least, sympathy with Marxist and socialist ideas. In consequence, it takes for granted many matters which are contentious within the peace movement and on the Left (notably, in regard to the nature of Soviet aid to liberation struggles).

I am stimulated to attempt a summary of the book in response to suggestions that the book's most useful contribution is its summary of Soviet initiatives to end the arms race and to restore detente. If, indeed, this is the book's most useful contribution and the reader seeks such information, I strongly recommend Arbatov (see below) as a more comprehensive alternative. However, by my reckoning, this simple and somewhat patronising label 'contains useful pro-Soviet material' — though well-intentioned — greatly devalues the entire book. Important as it is to understand Soviet policies and expose anti-Soviet slanders, this is but one aspect of many examined by Halliday.

He describes eight major and several minor factors shaping the course of world events of which the 'Great Contest' between capitalism and communism is only one. He is particularly illuminating when analysing how North-South, West-West and intra-state conflicts contribute to the arms race and the way in which these factors interact. He does not come up with

a simplistic non-Marxist conclusion that one factor dominates all others or that the relative weight of these factors is fixed and immutable by time and events. In short, this is a responsible and creative analysis of the dialectics of international relations and deserves a wide readership.

There are, naturally, aspects of Halliday's interpretation to which some may take exception — notably in regard to the relatively minor role his assessment ascribes to the arms race *per se* in world conflict. But these are matters of judgement and, especially within the peace movement, Halliday's global survey is a useful corrective to much current thinking and is likely to stimulate an outward-looking discussion of the 'why' of the arms race.

Halliday takes great care over defining terms — for example, 'cold war' or 'detente' are *policies* whereas the 'arms race' describes *actions* — and he engages in intense debate with other writers on these issues. For my part however, I find it difficult to enthuse over whether postwar history is best described as an 'arms race' or 'the cold war' or 'two cold wars separated by detente' — unless this in some way affects 'how' we campaign to end whatever we choose to call it.

Last in readability, though perhaps first in importance, is a semi-informal explanation of Soviet attitudes by Georgi Arbatov who is a Director of the Institute of United States and Canadian Studies in Moscow. This is the book to recommend to anyone wishing for an authoritative explanation of

Soviet policies.

From such a source it is unrealistic to expect anything other than a black and white picture of the world with the Soviet Union always reasonable and with the West always responsible for all problems. But the value of this exposition lies, however, not in the arguments but in the authority of his explanations of Soviet government attitudes and the conviction his answers convey in expressing the Soviet peoples' desire for peace and its fear of Western intentions.

By coincidence, as I was completing this review I received a letter from a long-time non-political friend who recently visited the Soviet Union as a tourist. She remarks, 'I do not think I have heard so much about World War II in one week before'. The intense desire for peace of the Soviet people is evident to all travellers to the USSR and comes through in the way Arbatov deals with each question. Terms like 'counter-city' and 'collateral damage' are mentioned only in scornful asides — though sometimes this refreshing directness can be disturbing.

For example, in reply to a question about, in effect, limiting nuclear war, he commented, '... I can't imagine that the

government and military command of a country receiving the news that several thousand warheads are flying in its direction would sit idly by and wait for them to explode, so that they can determine whether it's a counterforce or a counter-value strike, and then start to indulge in these painful reflections and intellectual exercises'.

What this reply illustrates is that deep theoretical studies of the 'rules' of nuclear war — so popular in the West — carry little weight in the Soviet Union. Whilst Soviet insistence that any nuclear war will be a holocaust has the virtue of honesty and directness, their unwillingness to participate in and understand NATO military thinking can be carried too far and, in the past, has meant that Soviet negotiators have been outsmarted by their more sophisticated American opponents.

Similarly, Arbatov displays apparent ignorance of the different nature of weapons of deterrence and those that might be used as part of a first-strike and, in consequence, cannot understand why Soviet insistence on military parity (as opposed to military sufficiency) means that the Soviet Union is developing weapons

perceived in the West as *intended and only usable* for a 'first-strike'. What Arbatov does not seem to appreciate is that Soviet insistence on parity in weapons will be interpreted as wanting parity in military intentions.

By another coincidence I have just received a strongly-worded letter from an address in the GDR objecting to a speech I made to the Communist Party Congress describing as 'idiotic' Soviet plans to have the same weapons as NATO. The points I made then were endorsed by a 20 to 1 majority in December at the CND Conference: namely, that the Soviet Union has no need for weapons with the accuracy and travel times required for a first-strike, that these counter-measures were incompatible with the Soviet pledge never to be first to use nuclear weapons and that such weapons made the USSR more likely to invite a pre-emptive first-strike from the US.

So the welcome refusal of the Soviet Union to engage in the same military thinking prevalent in the West also leads them into stupid errors that fuel the arms race. It is a matter for regret that Arbatov, like my correspondent from the GDR,

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does not appreciate how Soviet actions are interpreted in the West and that this can undermine the efforts of Western peace movements. Whilst Arbatov is invaluable in helping the West to understand Soviet attitudes, one is left in despair about the ability of the Soviet Union to understand the West.

John Cox

THE SOUND OF THE CITY

Charlie Gillett

Souvenir £6.95 516pp pbk

ISBN 285 62619 1

SOUND EFFECTS

Simon Frith

Constable £4.95 294pp pbk

ISBN 009 464 9502

Both these books are considerably revised second editions; the original *The Sound of the City* appeared in 1971, while *Sound Effects* revises *The Sociology of Rock* (1978). Gillett and Frith aren't the only ones who have felt the need to adjust their books; from Greil Marcus (*Mystery Train*) to Fernando Gonzalez (the minutely detailed *Disco-File*) the urge to rewrite is nearly pandemic.

There are two main reasons for the revisions: firstly, more detailed researches have altered the very composition of the musical past, and this has been closely linked to an unprecedented number of record company re-issues. When, for example, Gillett wrote the original *The Sound of the City*, there wasn't a single Louis Jordan LP available to back up, or refute, his assessment of Jordan. Now there are at least a dozen, and a recent issue of *Blues Unlimited* published a complete Jordan discography. This information explosion and the consequent changes in taste and perspective are the main reasons for Gillett's re-write (although he hasn't changed his mind about Louis Jordan . . .).

The second major change can be summed up in one word: punk. When the Sex Pistols and the Clash went public in 1976, they seemed to offer new hope, new possibilities for the whole music industry, and not least for their audiences, from dispossessed dole queue youth to worn-out hippies and jaded music journalists. No other music has ever had such grand socio-political claims made for it. When *The Sociology of Rock* appeared in 1978, it was very much caught up in punk euphoria — although by no means unquestioning of simple hopes for a punk revolu-

tion. Now the euphoria has largely dispersed, and much of *Sound Effects* is taken up with assessing punk's losses and gains.

The Sound of the City sets out to be a more or less orthodox history of popular music from 1945 to 1971, although the complexity of the subject makes that history anything but straightforward. Beginning with Bill Haley's 'Crazy Man Crazy' in 1953, Gillett takes us through the emergence of rock 'n' roll, identifying five separate but related styles. He traces their development, and, he suggests, inevitable dilution into 'rock and roll', a safer but still attractive confection which evolved from the industry's attempts to regularise and regulate the unruly music and its wildly enthusiastic audiences. Taking us back to rhythm and blues and Tin Pan Alley in 1945, and forward through soul, country, Motown and surf music to 70s rock, Gillett's sure understanding of his subject offers fresh insights on the familiar, digging up the unfamiliar along the way. To begin with, most of the music is American, but eventually Britain gets a look in, and there's passing mention of reggae too.

From the very start, Gillett divides American record companies into 'majors' (RCA, Columbia, Capitol *et al*) and 'independents' (Atlantic, Specialty, Sun, the labels of a record collector's dreams) — the latter responsible for spotting and recording most of the liveliest music, the former eager to pick up the trends and make the most of them. This useful division is situated at the heart of Gillett's history, which sees four factions battling to make sense of the music: the performers, both innovators and copyists; the independents, quick to spot a gap and fill it; the majors, desperate to hold on to their market; and finally, the audience, not at all a passive receptacle for whatever is handed to it. Occasionally the audience's role is idealised, exaggerated: at one point Gillett says that at the time of the Beatles' first LP 'the British audience despised the lush contrivances of contemporary American records' — but a look at the charts for 1963 suggests otherwise; 'lush contrivances' have always sold well, both here and in America.

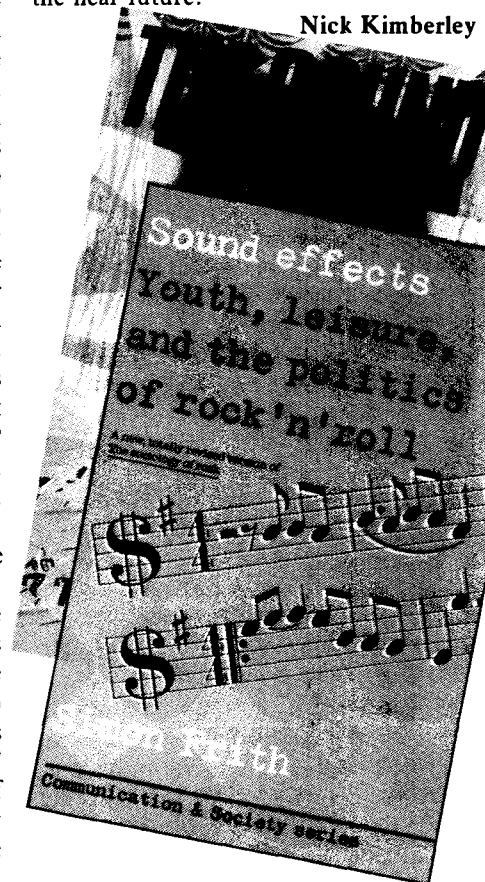
Where Gillett concentrates on the musical events which constituted this four-way struggle, Frith chooses to analyse the struggle itself, leaving music history to other writers. The book's sub-title is 'Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll'; Frith looks at the interaction of music, the audience and those who purvey the music: record companies, music

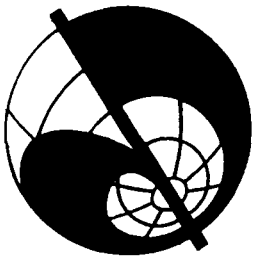
publishers, radio stations. As he says, 'musical texts are volatile'; and their forms and meanings are at least negotiable. This fact is precisely what renders redundant any Frankfurt School pooh-poohing of pop as inevitably harmful. Despite existing at the heart of capitalism, rock can't simply be contained and manipulated — the very complexity of Gillett's history suggests as much. Frith contends that 'music is still . . . the source of a power and joy that are disturbing as well as relaxing'; the struggle to make sense of and enjoy rock music is, finally, 'the struggle for fun'. Along with other recent analysts, Frith sees pleasure as conspicuously absent from left thinking, and wants to correct that omission.

Despite relying on a rather monolithic conception of the music's audience (ie, white and youthful), both books are careful and thought-provoking in ways that no other books have approached. They may not be definitive, exhaustive, but no book on the history of rock and its audience could ever hope to be. To a certain extent, both fill in some of the gaps with long, annotated bibliographies which set the reader off in all sorts of other directions.

Looking around, I can't see anybody liable to come up with anything better in the near future.

Nick Kimberley





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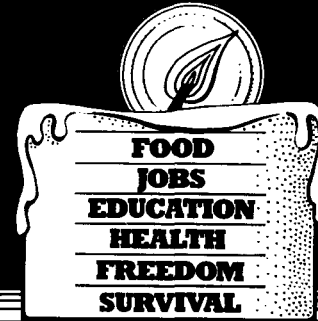
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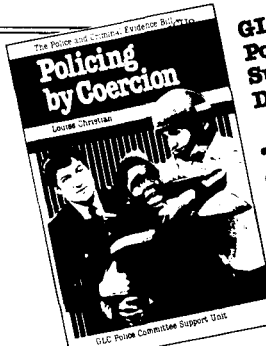
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Labour's Lost Millions 3

The debate continues . . .

**BERT MUNRO AND
DES WALSHE:**
Alliances are critical

We have read with interest the recent contributions by Rowthorn, Hobsbawm and Priscott on Labour's Lost Millions and are impressed the most by the lucidity and simplicity of their arguments. (If this were not the case then we would be the first to claim being unable to follow them). Indeed we would not be wasting your time and space were we not mystified at the inability to understand, or wilful distortion, by Michael Meacher, Eric Heffer and others (for example, the debate in the *Guardian*) of what we understand them to have said.

Without wishing to be accused of slavish support for their position, (as we are quite sure they will answer for themselves), but from our experience as both Communists and trade unionists with many years of working in the construction industry, we should like to endorse the validity and strength of their arguments and try to correct some of the false assertions made by Eric Heffer in December's *Marxism Today*.

As we understand the discussion so far, it has centred round an examination of the reasons for Labour's electoral defeat, and a look at the particular types of alliance that might be considered to defeat aspects of Thatcherism, or, Thatcherism itself. To this end we feel Priscott is wholly correct when he says that 'socialism now' is not a rallying cry that will build a political majority against Thatcher. Heffer replies to this by accusing the CP of being obsessed with alliances and questions the correctness of this policy, now and in the past. He goes on — totally ignoring the significance of Priscott's statement — 'What Labour has to do, in the William Morris sense, is to go out and make socialists. . . it must update and refine its policies, but it must do so as an independent party, not getting enmeshed in alliances.'

We have reread the contributions so far, and nowhere is it remotely suggested that

any party should surrender its independence or autonomy. What Priscott did go on to say, and it answers the bland rhetoric of Heffer and co, was that 'it is vital to project the vision of socialism — in ways that are relevant to modern times and to show the policies that are needed to win socialism. But (and this we feel is the kernel of the debate — *authors*) the majority of British people will not be won for socialism without experience of struggle on such issues as they can now be made to struggle for.' The deeper implications of the point are again either overlooked or ignored and Heffer ploughs on 'the party (Labour) must build up its membership until it becomes a mass party. . . and must particularly build up its strength in factories and workplaces'. This is not a new call and it does no harm to restate it but the question being posed by the discussion is not so much what should be done but how it is best achieved.

Facing reality

Heffer and others might do well to remember these discussions; for, unless we do attempt to understand the nature and difference of broad alliances and the winning of people to concepts of socialism and political awareness; unless we can open the minds of those who refuse to face reality but would resort to name calling — (Heffer again) 'some Eurocommunists have moved into a right wing social democratic position' (whatever this is supposed to mean) — we will at the next election be contemplating a situation where, as Hobsbawm so clearly put it in his letter to the *Guardian* (we quote from memory): 'the second worst thing for the people of this country and the labour movement would be a SDP-Lib-Lab alliance — but even worse would be the return of a Thatcher government for a third term.'

Whilst not contradicting Priscott it is well to remember that the CP developed the concept of alliances long before 1977. The question of alliances and their practical implications were therefore uppermost in our minds when, in 1971, in our own union, the EEUPTU, a number of candidates proffered themselves for support against Chapple for the position of

General Secretary, among them Eric Hammond. At the time Hammond (an EC member) stood openly for an end to the ban on communists holding office in the union, for the election (as opposed to appointment) of all full time officials and a whole range of democratic changes. In conjunction with national officers, full time officials, branch secretaries, stewards and communists, a campaign was initiated on behalf of Hammond, as it seemed to represent and amalgamate the broadest alliance against the right wing of the union and the best chance of Chapple's removal. After a long and sometimes acrimonious debate in the union, the fight to get Hammond accepted as the main broad left candidate was lost. We, as communists, fought for that broad alliance and in retrospect would still say we were absolutely correct.

We didn't see any alternative then and we see none now. Neither Heffer nor all the attendant CP critics have offered any alternative. The priorities of whole new sections of society are not necessarily those of our own. However, we will never win a mood for change unless we rid ourselves of some of the old concepts and ideas and embrace new methods of struggle called for by the constantly changing developments in our society. It is no longer sufficient to be just 'militant' or 'socialist' and make regular pleas for 'unity'. We believe that there is much to be learned from people's experiences but fear that in promoting our own 'brand' of socialism we fail to hear and listen to 'the masses' we would wish to represent. The sooner we stop claiming to have the 'the answer' to everyone's ills, and assuming we always know what their priorities are, the sooner we will change the fortunes of our labour movement and the working people of this country and win them for progressive change.

Far from being pessimistic we are optimistic for the future. The outcome of the CP Congress, the success of *Marxism Today* and the contributions of Hobsbawm, Rowthorn, Priscott and indeed Heffer all point to the real possibility of achieving some of the objectives looked forward to in *The British Road to Socialism*.

ANNA COOTE: The wrong debate

The first thing that strikes me about this debate we are having around Eric Hobsbawm's 'Labour's Lost Millions' is the way it has happened. The original article was published in October's *Marxism Today*. While it was still in proof form, certain people were sent copies and asked to respond. Replies from Michael Meacher and Robin Cook were duly published in November, and here is mine for December (January! – ed).

It is a useful way of stimulating discussion. Looking back at the October issue, though, I find myself wishing the same treatment had been given to the other major article it carried. This was by Tricia Davis and it explored the current relationships between feminism, the Left and Tory ideology. I really want to know how Michael Meacher and Robin Cook would have responded to it, and what Eric Hobsbawm might have said. Their thoughts on the issues raised in 'Labour's Lost Millions' were relatively predictable (the territory was familiar), but I cannot guess what they would have written if they had been sent proof copies of Tricia Davis's article and encouraged by the editor of *Marxism Today* to consider it as a matter of importance, meriting a detailed reply. An unpredictable debate on so crucial a subject might have been productive. Why was the five-star treatment reserved for Eric Hobsbawm?

Hobsbawm does have the edge on Davis in some respects: he's more famous, he's older, he's a professor and (yes, indeed!) he's a man. But does he therefore have more interesting things to say? Judge for yourself, if you can locate the back number. I only raise the question – and before you write it off as special pleading, consider how ideas are nourished and spread, how minds are changed, how manifestoes are written, how strategies are devised, how policies are translated into practice.

It takes more than an individual writing an article. Ideas need to be taken up and repeated by others; they need to be explored and developed and widely discussed. Let's suppose, for the sake of argument, that the ideas in Tricia Davis's

article were better than those in Eric Hobsbawm's – more original, more perceptive, dealing with more fundamental questions. If fewer people remember them now, it is through no fault of the author. No debate was orchestrated around her article; it was not sent out in proof form, or advertised on the cover of *Marxism Today*, or reprinted in the Guardian, or quoted by political columnists, or responded to by members of parliament and trade union leaders. This sort of thing rarely happens to articles written by women about feminist politics.

It's an example of the strategy of passive resistance which men have used so effectively against the women's movement. They appear to agree with us, and then do nothing about it. They publish our articles and go on publishing their own – alongside ours, but back-to-back, without reference or acknowledgement, as though ours were not part of the real world. This way, they avoid embarrassing disputes and help to ensure that the *status quo*, incorporating male privilege, is left undisturbed.

Unhealthy consequences

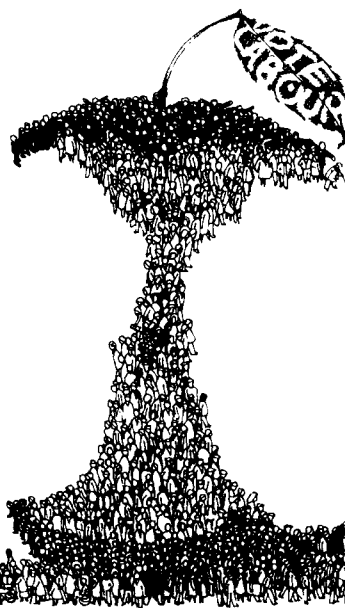
Eric Hobsbawm's analysis of Labour's defeat reveals the unhealthy consequences of this strategy. Like so many influential male writers, he provides no evidence that he has registered anything the women's movement has been saying in the last decade and a half. His observations are sadly impoverished.

When he addresses the question of how Labour should appeal to the working class – and to a 'coalition of forces' beyond it – he stresses that labour 'can and should

appeal to *all* women'. But is he aware that there may be a problem involved in appealing to the interests of women and men at the same time? We cannot tell. Is he aware that there is a conflict of interest between women and men? Is he aware that it is impossible to remove the social and economic disadvantages suffered by women without depriving men of the relative advantages they now enjoy? Does he think men will willingly relinquish their advantages? How does he imagine the Labour Party can make a genuine appeal to women? Should it sit tight and hope that half the population will not notice that it is selling a brand of half-baked socialism, built on female powerlessness and poverty? None of this is clear from 'Labour's Lost Millions'.

Replying to Hobsbawm in November, Robin Cook pointed to the 'resoundingly negative' character of Labour's appeal. He adroitly identified the problem, but what is to be done about it? He did not say. It seems that the Labour Party has forgotten how to ask itself some basic questions. What sort of society do we want to live in? What kind of a future should we be planning for our children? These are not questions about material conditions alone, but about social relations, and they are questions which the women's movement has been trying to answer. Who will have power and privilege? It won't do any longer to answer: 'the working class', or 'we shall all be equal under socialism'. Within the working class, men have power over women; and socialism, as envisaged by the established male Left, fails to tackle inequality between women and men – especially where it is most deeply rooted, within the family.

Eric Hobsbawm calls upon the Labour Party to strive for broad support. An excellent idea. But this can only be achieved if the party understands the interests and aspirations of all the different groups it seeks to represent, and how they stand in relation to each other. At the heart of the coalition of support, on which Hobsbawm sets such store for Labour's future, there is a profound and unresolved conflict. The party can try to understand and resolve it. But, if it is interested in building solid support in the 80s and 90s, it will overlook that conflict at its peril.



.....:Letters:.....

NONSENSE

I read Eric Heffer's article in *Marxism Today*, December 1983, with delight. It was high time that the nonsense being peddled by Communist Party theorists, like Hobsbawm and Rowthorn was exposed.

Hobsbawm's passion for a pact with the SDP would mean the end of any possibility of moving forward to a socialist society, since the SDP is no more left than the Tory Party and the case outlined by Bob Rowthorn before the general election, attacking Labour's policy for withdrawal from the EEC and urging continued membership, would have only added to our difficulties. Eric Heffer was right, of course, in drawing attention to the fact that neither Hobsbawm nor Rowthorn are actually in the Labour Party and, therefore, are perhaps not quite the best advocates in the world so far as the future of our Party is concerned.

Nonetheless, I believe it is important that a debate should take place similar to the one in your magazine and there is no doubt that Communists have a contribution to make to that debate. Happily, the views of Hobsbawm on an alliance with the SDP and Rowthorn on support for the

Common Market are not shared by the Communist Party itself — are they?

Alf Lomas MEP

FACING REALITY

When the chairperson of the Labour Party contributes to the highly successful Communist journal *Marxism Today*, it surely suggests that the CP is far from being in the same situation as the ILP was in its decline. Eric Heffer will have to do better than that if he is to improve on his superficial and inconsistent reasoning.

Eric makes many references to Hobsbawm and Rowthorn, but only one passing mention of Priscott, in his attempt to confuse the concept of united mass struggle on issues, with that of an electoral arrangement with the Liberals and the SDP. In consequence his article concentrates on the electoral support and prospects for Labour and totally leaves out of the picture the mass of the people in action, before during and after elections.

In my experience in Bedfordshire, good mass actions on rents, schools, hospitals etc, have been thwarted, stifled and come to grief when they have been constrained to the short term interests of one political

party. The long term gains that might have accrued were thus discarded at the outset. A highly successful pensioner movement on the other hand has had more positive results, raising morale, isolating the Tories, building bridges that help people to move from one political position to another. Gains on the County Council first by Labour and recently by the Liberals give us a 50-50 position between the Tories and the anti-Tories. Does Eric suggest that we should never take the facts into account and that no arrangements should ever be made to completely break Tory control. Nothing should be ruled out that assists the day to day struggle.

Tom Mitchell, Luton

LABOUR'S FINANCES

In his article on 'Labour's Lost Millions' in the November issue of *Marxism Today* Robin Cook stated: 'the patent inability of our central headquarters to manage the election campaign is revealing about the priorities of those who had been in charge over the preceding years. Our dismal impact on the media was prefigured by our failure to maintain a full-time broadcasting officer in the run up to the election'.

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.....Letters.....

When considering this criticism your readers should bear in mind the circumstances in which the number of staff employed by the Labour Party has been reduced. By early summer 1982 it was clear that, unless emergency measures were taken, the Party would incur by the end of the calendar year an overdraft substantially higher than the level authorised by the bank. There were no reserves. The Party was also under an obligation to implement collective agreements negotiated with unions for back-pay. At 31 Dec 1981 unpaid back pay amounted to more than £400,000. This was, in reality, a measure of the earlier low pay of Labour Party staff. The emergency measures, taken during the summer of 1982 and subsequently have included a pay freeze in response to 1982 claims, pay increases in 1983 lower than the national average, staff cuts, etc.

The reduction in staff has been secured almost entirely by 'natural wastage'. Every vacancy that has arisen has been considered collectively by the heads of departments. We have spent many hours discussing staff numbers and negotiating with union representatives. It was in this context that we decided not to replace the broadcasting officer when the former holder of this office sought early retirement.

Even now we are still in real difficulty. In 1982, despite the special measures, our operating deficit for the year was £171,000. We are still in overdraft. We have still to meet certain back payments for salaries. There will be no increase in trade union affiliation fees in 1984. The possibility of new legislation on trade union political funds poses a new and grave threat.

I don't wish to detract from the many constructive points that Robin Cook and Michael Meacher make, but it is right I think to put them within the context I have set out above. It is of overriding importance that we should work together for Labour's recovery.

Jim Mortimer
General Secretary, Labour Party

CLINGING TO THE OLD

Tricia Davis' article in October *Marxism Today* set out to depict some of the advances, setbacks and problems facing women in Britain today. Yet Vic Mortimer tells us the old, old story that 'the important thing is to portray men and women in unity fighting against capitalism'.

As one who for many years, from 1949, loyally tried to 'put political struggle before my sex', until I found this only reinforced

men's paternalistic attitudes, I take exception to Vic Mortimer's belittling of the rôle which the women's movement plays in the fight for socialism and the liberation of the human race. One of the main obstacles in reaching that goal is the attitude of men who cling to the old and wish the new would go away.

Patrica Mitchell, Luton

LONDON POLITICS

Michael Ward's article on the GLC contains a number of interesting points. However, there are significant weaknesses.

Little attention is paid to the labour movement outside the Labour Party. The campaigning of progressive sections of the London trade union movement to win positive change in the London Labour Party receives no attention. Yet, without this input by London trade unionists, many of them Communist Party members, the climate of ideas and progressive base which created the conditions for the emergence of a progressive GLC would never have materialised.

Michael Ward makes no mention of the Communist Party. This omission is connected to the downplaying of the role of popular movements in general and the labour movement in particular. Discussion of the progressive movements for education, to improve London Transport, to develop campaigns for popular involvement, left and democratic policies and action in London require reference to the role of the Communist Party. Communists have played leading, often essential, roles in all these campaigns. Their work has been informed by the Party's strategy of working for a broad, democratic alliance.

Now, London Communists are deeply involved in the practical campaigning to save the GLC. Our view is that the Tory threats to the GLC can be defeated by Londoners taking mass, united action. A critical test will be the success of the Day of Strike and Demonstrative Action on 24 January in opposition to the Tory plans for London's services. We are sure London readers of *Marxism Today* will be doing all they can to make this Day of Action a day of victory for Londoners and defeat for the Tory Government.

Dave Green and Ivan Beavis, London

BEAUJOLAIS BOLSHEVIKS

Perhaps it is time to change the name of your magazine. How about 'Theoretical and discussion journal of the Beaujolais Bolsheviks, Muscadet Marxists and Ries-

ling Revolutionaries'? Why bother to raise the political level of party members when you can raise their alcohol level? I look forward to future articles on 'Hegel and Habitat'; 'the dialectical relationship between Swedish pine kitchen suites and the colonial revolution'; and 'why Gramsci wore Gucci'.

Steve Davies (hic), Cardiff

We welcome your letters for the February issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office not later than Friday 6 January.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Armstrong is an expert on African affairs.

Nick Raynsford is the director of SHAC (Shelter Housing Aid Centre).

Harry Fletcher is Assistant General Secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers.

Roger Owen teaches at the Middle East Centre, St Anthony's College, Oxford.

Raymond Williams is Professor of Drama at Cambridge University and author of *Orwell*, to be republished in February 1984.

Stuart Hall is Professor of Sociology at the Open University and co-editor of *The Politics of Thatcherism*.

David Edgar is a playwright whose recent play *Maydays* will resume at the Barbican in February.

For participants in the round table see p31.

Melvyn Bragg is a broadcaster and novelist.

Micheline Wandor is a playwright, poet and writer.

Tony del Renzio is an art historian and critic.

Karl Dallas was the first folk correspondent of *Melody Maker*, and is a freelance journalist.

John Cox is a member of the Communist Party Executive Committee.

Nick Kimberley is a bookseller and works for *City Limits*.

Des Walshe and Bert Munro are members of the EPTU and the CP.

Anna Coote is a television journalist.

NEWS

Letterbox Library This is the first non-sexist children's book club offering books which are free of sexual stereotyping and encouraging awareness that we live in a multi-ethnic society. Further information from Gillian Harris, Children's Book Cooperative, 42 Newark Road, London E5 01-985 2884.

Weather Alert Oxfam has launched an appeal for aid for some of those hardest hit in more than 40 countries suffering from unprecedented floods and droughts caused by climate extremes. Donations or further enquiries to Bernie McDermott, Oxfam, 172 Archway Road, London N6 01-348 4225.

History of the Unity Theatre Colin Chambers is currently undertaking research for a new book on the history of the Unity Theatre. He is interested in contacting anyone who has been involved in its work in whatever capacity during its 40 or so years of existence. Contact him at 18 Statham Grove, London N16.

Warrington NGA on the line 11 minute video made by trade unionists about the *Messenger* dispute, putting the trade union's point of view on picketing, and the issues. Available from Merseyside Trade Union, Community and Unemployed Resource Centre, Hardman Street, Liverpool (051 709 3995). £5 deposit, refundable on return of video.

CAMPAIGNS

Pensioners for Peace A national organisation aimed at involving our 10 million senior citizens in campaigning for peace. Further details from Jack Shepperd, P for P, 7 Sandford, Broomsborrow Heath, Ladbury HRS INX. Tel 053 181485

Rights of Women The collective of feminist legal workers (ROW) will be monitoring the effects of new rules on women's access to social security, as they fall short of the EEC Directive for equal treatment for women. They want women's groups and claimants unions to encourage women to claim if they are eligible and protest if they are not, so pressure is put on the Government to review its exclusions. Contact Rada Gungaloo, ROW, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 01-278 6394 or 8501.

DEMONSTRATIONS

National Campaign Against the Police Bill 21 Jan. A march and rally

to draw attention to the new powers this will give the police, and the dangers to civil liberties. The march will be from Brockwell Park, Brixton to Trafalgar Square.

Democracy for London Day of Action 24 Jan. All the trade unions in the Greater London area will be taking action as part of the campaign to defeat the Government's plan to abolish the GLC. The demonstration starts in Hyde Park and will culminate in a rally in the Festival Hall.

CONFERENCES

Six Commonwealth Women Novelists 7 Jan. One day workshop to examine the work of Miles Franklin, Margaret Atwood, Anita Desai, Buchi Emecheta and Janet Frame. Commonwealth Institute,



Kensington, London 9.30 to 5pm. Fee £6.00, £3.00 unwaged/students. Details from Julia Osmond 01-603 4535 ex 265.

Communist Party Students Conference. 7 Jan. Communist Party students are holding a conference. Full details are available, together with conference documents, from the Student Office, 16 St John Street, London EC1 (01-251 4406). The conference is open to all Communist Party students.

Political Communications in the 1983 Elections. 13-15 Jan. Organised by the Political Studies Association to discuss the media, the parties and the polls. At Essex University. Details from Ivor Crewe, Dept of Government, Essex University, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex 0206 862286.

Racism and Sport 29 Jan. A national discussion conference sponsored by the Afro-Caribbean Organisation and the Communist Party to examine the effects of racism on sport and how this can be combatted. All sports enthusiasts welcome. 4.30pm County Hall,

creche available. Registration £1, unwaged 50p. Apply to Racism and Sport Conference, 16 St John Street, London EC1.

Save the GLC 7 Jan. A consultative conference for Communists in London, to discuss the Tory attack on London's services, development of the campaign, and forms of resistance. Creche available. Registration £1, further information from Organisation Department, LDGP, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1 01-242 1776.

EVENTS

Commonwealth Women Novelists 5-23 Jan. An exhibition of novels, biographies of women novelists and critical works. Admission free. Mon-Sat 10-5pm, Sun 2-5pm. Exhibition Galleries,

Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8.

Council for Academic Freedom and Democracy AGM 7 Jan. John Saville will open on 'The last four years in higher education — an appraisal.' Non members welcome. 2.15pm, LSE, Houghton St, London WC1.

Guatemala: A Testimonial 8-14 Jan. A photographic exhibition from New York on the plight of Guatemala's refugees. Organised by Guatemala Relief Project at Camerawork, 121 Roman Road, London E2. Tues 1-6pm, Wed-Sat 11-6pm.

Animal Liberation — a socialist issue? 17 Jan. One of a series of meetings on the politics of science. Speaker M Killian, Northern Animal Liberation League 7.30pm. Polytechnic Students Union, Sidney Street, Manchester 10.

Content, presentation and politics of Marxism Today. 9 Jan, organised by North Kensington CP branch, discussion opened by Martin

Jacques. Readers welcome. 7.30pm NKAT Meeting Hall, Thorpe Close, Ladbroke Grove W10.

Kampuchea 5th Anniversary of People's Republic. Celebration and reception at Caxton Hall, London, 6.30-9.30pm. Refreshments, wine, guests from SE Asia. Invitations from Joan Yulle, 52 St Johns Park, London SE3.

PUBLICATIONS

Your Council Under Attack. A booklet which gives a detailed analysis of government policies for local services and democracy and shows how these policies are intended to benefit business at the expense of the local voter. Published by the Labour Research Department, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1. Price 60p (inc p&p).

Developments in the Steel Industry in Teeside. This pamphlet highlights the main factors in the decline of the BSC and shows how government policy is affecting steelmaking areas such as Teeside, giving a perspective for fighting back. Produced by the CP Middlesborough Branch, it is available from Mike Fearon, 27 Thorntree House, Cargo Fleet Lane, Middlesborough. Price 50p (inc p&p).

Scottish Marxist Issue 27 of CP Scottish Committee journal, features articles on the women's peace movement, Scottish films, working women in Scotland and an interview with Hugh Wyper of TGWU. Price 60p (inc p&p) or £2.60 for 4 issues, from 44 Carlton Place, Glasgow G5.

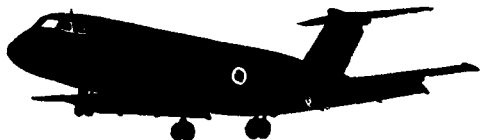
Liverpool's State of Health A new pamphlet published by Merseyside CP which combines a detailed survey of Liverpool's health service with more general arguments about the need to democratise the NHS and secure major changes in the priorities of health care. Price 90p, £1.15 inc p&p, available from Merseyside CP, 39 Shaw Street, Liverpool 6.

Action: Fifty Years in the Life of a Union The film technicians' union ACTT celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, with the publication of an impressive, glossy and picture-filled history. Available from bookshops or from Action, ACTT, 2 Soho Square, London W1, price £9.95, postage £1.50.

Entries for the February Update should be sent as soon as possible (latest date Friday 6 January) to Maria Loftus, Marxism Today 16 St John Street London EC1 or tel 01-251 4406 or 01-607 3344 (evenings).

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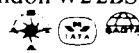
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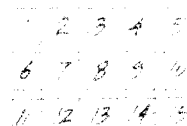
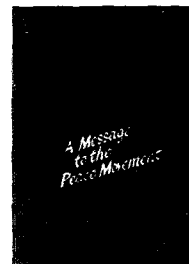
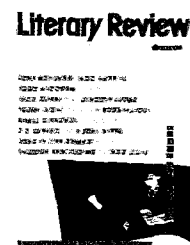
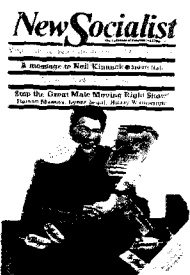
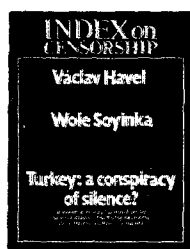


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